

Planning Commission Hearing on Appeal of Airport Expansion Permit
March 4th at 6:00 PM County Commission Chambers, 105 Albright Street, Taos

Dear Taoseños:

Some of your neighbors (John Nichols, Dilia Martinez, Phillip Reyna, Ernest Concha, Daniel Romero, Bonnie Korman, Judy Sutton and Edward and Jennifer Sylvester) oppose the airport expansion project because of their serious concerns about the impacts of that project on Taos and the neighborhoods surrounding the airport.

County staff approved the airport expansion two days before Christmas, without a public hearing. Your neighbors are fighting that approval because they believe the public should have the right to express their concerns at a public meeting. There is a lot of misinformation about the project, and we encourage you to learn the facts for yourself.

We strongly encourage you to go to the Planning Commission hearing to ask your questions and express any concerns you have about the impact of the airport expansion and the probable devaluation of your property. The Planning Commission is made up of community volunteers, and the voices of their fellow residents really do matter to them. It is not too late to stop this ill-advised boondoggle.

This runway is not needed: The real purpose of the project is to allow larger jets to land, not because of wind direction. The FAA recommends (but does not require) that an airport have favorable wind coverage 95% of the time. Taos airport has favorable wind coverage 94.13% of the time. A shorter, gravel crosswind runway would be adequate for the few occasions recreational and emergency planes can't use the existing runway. Is it worth \$24 million dollars of taxpayer money so private jets don't have to wait for the wind to shift 1% of the time?

This runway is not about jobs or economic development: "None of the [new airport construction] would create an appreciable permanent change in employment... would not result in any appreciable secondary or induced impacts, including population growth, increased development, and business activity over existing trends." *Final Environmental Impact Statement by the U.S. Government*

This runway is not about protecting people's safety: A highly qualified airport consultant hired by a Taos community organization shows that the majority of airplane accidents occur near the ends of runways. This accident zone for the new runway sits right over existing homes and residential land south and east of the airport.

This runway is not about protecting affordable communities: The neighborhood around the proposed runway is a key place for low and moderate income housing. The Town apparently thinks those who live there should suffer the impacts of a larger airport because they don't live in an expensive area: "those residential buyers and builders that chose 'cheap' over 'pristine' were fully aware that junk yards, landfills and airports don't just disappear and, inevitably, expand over time." *Town Manager Rick Bellis, 11/19/2014.*

This is about increased air traffic in your community and over your homes: If the airport is expanded, air traffic will increase 25%, to almost 20,000 take offs and landings per year. Not only will there be more planes, but they will be bigger. The existing runway is 5,803 feet long with a capacity of 24,000 pounds. The airport wants to add an 8,600-foot long, 60,000-pound runway. Even worse, it is estimated that 40% of all flights will use the new runway, requiring them to circle at low altitude over residential neighborhoods.

This runway would make residential uses incompatible with the expanded airport: According to a plan developed by the Town's airport consultants (that they did not submit to the County), residential use in certain areas where it is now allowed and exists will be "clearly unacceptable" when the new runway is put in. "[Residential] use must not be allowed. Potential safety or overflight nuisance impacts are likely in this area." *Off Airport Land Use Plan.*

This runway is about getting wealthy visitors to the ski valley without driving through Taos: "[Louis] Bacon has been working with the local community to have the airport become a more elite jetport, capable of handling up to 45-passenger regional jets." *Forbes Magazine, 11/03/2014.* The purpose of the \$350 million expansion at the Ski Valley is to provide hotels, restaurants, "Taos" shops and all services, so that skiers coming in charter jets will spend all their money there and never come to Taos.

This runway is not about meeting commitments for the Town to qualify for federal funding: The Town committed to the FAA that "appropriate action, including the adoption of zoning laws, has or will be taken to the extent reasonable to restrict the use of land next to or near the airport to uses that are compatible with normal airport operations." *Town Manager Gus Cordova, March 21, 2001.* But has anyone contacted you about what new restrictions will be imposed on your property, or how the use of your property will be limited to be compatible with the new runway? Do you think they are waiting until the airport project is done, so you have no opportunity to object?

This is not a "Done Deal!" Come to the March 4th 6 pm public hearing and stop having your home sacrificed for the wealthy users of jets. You have the power, you can make a difference!

For more information, go to www.landwaterandculture.org or email info@landwaterandculture.org

Sincerely,



Christopher L. Graeser