

In Response to Mr. Cheston
June 13, 2001

Michael Cheston, RIAC's Executive Director, should be commended for his taking the issue of continued growth of the airport to the public via his 6/12/2001 letter to the editor. The citizens affected by the airport's operations have long awaited a public position by the corporation responsible for the management of the airport at Green regarding airport growth. His letter is the clearest statement yet on this issue. And it is one to which the public can and should respond. As one representative of an organized body of resistance to irresponsible growth I would like to take this opportunity to respond directly to Mr. Cheston's letter:

1. **"Arguably the wetland is adjacent to an abandoned landfill (the old Truk-Away site, currently owned by the Department of Administration) and is of questionable quality."** This statement is certain to wake up the environmentalists. The wetlands are of unquestionable value as an integral part of an ecosystem that serves the Bay. Their quality probably has been jeopardized by the landfill. Studies should now be done to determine the extent of its damage and the entity responsible for its probable clean-up needs to be determined. My guess is that the Department of Administration may be on the hook for this one.
2. **"My concern is that some airport opponents may see this issue as an opportunity to restrict airport operations."** I would be concerned if intelligent citizens were not concerned about unrestricted or careless airport growth. And, for the record, I, myself, and a good many other C.A.N. and other citizens, are categorically not "airport opponents". We are concerned citizens. Against irresponsible growth - not the airport. Against hasty decision-making that serves special interests - not the airport. Against being labeled as "the locals" or "airport opponents" - not the airport. We want a properly sized, socially responsible and environmentally respectful airport. We are not categorically against the airport -but we will challenge any and every attempt to fail to respect our rights to equal protection under the law and the preservation of our quality of life and environment. (It was probably fitting for Mr. Cheston's letter to appear in the "Gaspee" issue).
3. **"These environmental issues can potentially be addressed at the same time RIAC looks to extend the crosswind runway."** 1) I can assure you these issues WILL BE addressed. 2) Thankyou for publicly acknowledging for the first time that **"RIAC looks to extend the crosswind runway."** Taking a stand is preferable to pretending you have none. It gives us something to focus on in the process of evaluation. It properly alerts the citizenry. It is honest.
4. **"I am asking your readers, and specifically, the SRC and City of Warwick, to consider the potential impacts of losing this critical runway surface."** The former Governor should have considered this before building his nameplate where he did. Do not try to pass the blame at this point onto the citizenry for an obvious lack of due diligence by the State for the past 10 years. If you go back and read the editorials all the way to the 60's you will find clear alarm expressed by the citizens warning about "oversizing" the airport. Did the State listen to the citizens then. No. Has anyone from the airport considered our voluminous feedback to the Part 150 Study and the Landrum & Brown charettes? Apparently not. So now it's going to be **our** fault if you ultimately cannot fit a round peg into a square whole? I don't think so.

5. **“Every jet operation will be forced to over-fly the most populated areas of Warwick”.** They already do no matter what runway they fly out of. And, apparently unlike RIAC, we are concerned about our Cranston neighbors, too, who take the brunt of 16/34 take-offs.
6. **“A real potential for scheduled carriers to cancel or divert flights due to unfavorable (safe) wind conditions on the main runway will exist.”** Yes. But, again, this was predictable (above). And if some of those carriers are the ones landing after 11pm and taking off before 7am , or failing to use the designated flight paths over Warwick Neck (like Southwest) ,I doubt there will be a huge outcry from the Warwick residents and other citizens impacted by current operations.
7. **“T.F. Green may experience a potential loss of airline service to Rhode Island.”** Yes. But again, this should have been seen by the planners through due diligence. Someone apparently failed to adequately assess their resources before beginning to build. They apparently let loose their marketing people before determining capacity. The SRC needs to consider this in the current planning process to make certain this careless planning doesn't continue. **If I were an airline I'd be furious.** It would appear that RIAC may not be able to deliver what they marketed. But again, this is not the public's fault. **We** weren't given a vote in the explosive growth process. **We** didn't misrepresent anything to the airlines. On the contrary. **We've** been expressing ourselves quite clearly. **Don't try to blame us!**
8. **“The City of Warwick may see a loss of tax revenues from businesses relocating to other airports with better operating runways.”** True. But this, too, needs to be assessed. Projects currently on the drawing boards may need to be revised or scrapped, but the City hasn't received any funds yet from future projects to my knowledge. (God only knows what kind of deals have been proposed). We have been assured that Fed-Ex and UPS wouldn't even consider moving as far away as Quonset, so that shouldn't be an issue. And I doubt, as a worse case scenario, (unless RIAC has other, as yet undisclosed problems with the long runway), that a decrease in some airport operations would turn Green into a “ghost-campus”. There are plenty of business opportunities in and around the airport area for plenty of revenue generating business. Maybe not the people-mover-parking-garage metropolis, but something tasteful and profitable.
9. **“The wetlands to the east of the airport will continue in their present state.”** I don't think so. One good thing to come out of the SRC process is the public disclosure that we have two areas of serious concern for the State and our Federal officials. 1) The land-fill (which may prove to be an environmental hazard beyond anyone's imagination), and; 2) the probability that the wetlands have been compromised. Runway or no runway, things cannot be left in their “present state”.

I apologize for the length of this response, but Mr. Cheston took the time to enlighten us as to his position and he deserves a direct response, not only from me, as the representative of a body of concerned citizens from neighborhoods in Warwick, Cranston and beyond, but from every “stakeholder” . I would encourage all of our citizens to continue to participate in the SRC process by making certain your elected and SRC representatives understand your concerns and positions. You can witness the next SRC meeting which has been scheduled for June 28. Call Mr. Cheston's office for the time and place.

Raleigh M. Jenkins, C.A.N. President, Member-at-Large S.R.C.