



Rhode Island Airport Corporation

February 18, 2002

Reverend Duane Clinker, Chairman
T. F. Green Master Plan Study / EIS Study Resource Committee
Quality of Life Subcommittee

Subject: Feedback To Quality Of Life Subcommittee January 24 Initial Report

Dear Reverend Clinker:

Thank you for the *Initial Report from the Quality of Life Subcommittee* you and members of your committee provided to the entire SRC at our meeting on January 24th. I commend you on your handling of this, at times, overwhelming task, as well as on the thoughtfulness that clearly went into its preparation.

Although your efforts will continue to evolve, I thought it might be helpful to offer some initial thoughts and feedback to some of the issues raised.

The scope of issues identified in your *Initial Report* includes those that will be quantified within the Master Plan Update and/or the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It also deals with some issues that fall outside the purview of both processes, but which I will endeavor to address as well. It bears restating that the Environmental Impact Statement follows strict federal direction outlined in FAA Orders 5050.4a and 1050.1d, and there are limits to the extent that this process can serve to report on all environmental conditions outside the context of studying the effects of a proposed plan.

Because the Master Planning Process is somewhat less strictly guided, it has allowed RIAC to expand the scope of the study and to respond to Study Resource Committee (SRC) requests. For example, in response to the SRC's concern, RIAC directed its consultant to prepare and present an analysis of potential constraints to growth at T. F. Green (Constrained Forecast Analysis). This analysis, while well beyond the traditional parameters of a Master Planning Process, will provide more information to the SRC, and will allow RIAC and FAA to make a more informed decision about the future of the airport. To make sure that all members of the SRC are fully informed about how the forecasts have changed since September 11th and to make sure that the ramifications of implementing options described in the Constrained Forecast are understood, we



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will host an additional meeting of the SRC. This meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2002. Lastly, in the spirit of sharing all data and information that is available to RIAC decision makers, we have expanded the study web page by adding a library of supporting documentation.

Outside of the realm of traditional planning, RIAC has initiated studies in several areas of community and environmental concern and our planning and environmental departments have initiated research, documentation, and studies to help answer questions about air and water quality surrounding T. F. Green. While these studies have temporarily been suspended due to RIAC's post-September 11th budget crisis, we are committed to fund these initiatives as soon as possible.

In response to some of the key issues raised in your *Initial Report*, I offer the following comments:

Our Context: A community already stretched by development

We recognize that the City of Warwick is set in an increasingly urban context and that the airport is one of many factors that contribute to this setting. To the extent that some of these factors are measurable in defining the airport's impact area, we will quantify these impacts. Regarding safety, FAA's principal purpose is to ensure the highest degree of safety, a tenet that is reflected in all of its guidelines and directives.

Air Quality Issues: Information Needed

While air quality issues are difficult to quantify and isolate by source, the EIS will quantify all airport related emissions under existing conditions and those that would occur under various future scenarios. Moreover, RIAC's proposed air quality monitoring program will collect air quality samples that are influenced by all emissions sources in the area.

Noise: More than a nuisance

While all FAA-sponsored environmental studies, including the Part 150 Study, have utilized the 65 DNL contour in planning, this is by no means meant to suggest that no noise occurs in areas outside of this contour. At the time of EIS scoping, anticipated in early summer 2002, members of the public will have the opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of the 65 DNL federal standard.

There appears to be a misunderstanding regarding the availability of data: no 60 DNL contour has been prepared to illustrate noise exposure surrounding T. F. Green. All noise complaint data is being compiled and will be accurately reflected in the EIS.



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Finally, in terms of developing contours for different seasonal conditions, this is not an accepted procedure for measuring noise exposure and as such, FAA policy does not support preparation of such a contour. However, as part of the EIS, a grid-point analysis will be performed to define noise exposure levels in areas beyond the 65 DNL contour.

Noise Remediation: Households in Limbo

RIAC is limited by the Federal Noise Remediation Program, which makes available limited funding on an annual basis. That said, when possible, RIAC has supplemented federal allocations in an attempt to speed up the sound insulation and acquisition process. We have invested millions of dollars toward this effort to date, more than \$10 million (RIAC, not federal) for land acquisition in the last two years alone.

The Rights of the Public and Broad Easements

Federal guidelines for sound insulation have recently been updated to include broader aviation easements for participants. These guidelines apply to all participants in the program using federal funds nationwide.

Real Estate Values: Potentially Significant Impact

For some time now, attempts have been made to link lagging home values to nearby land uses or transportation centers such as airports. Results have generally been mixed or inconclusive, largely because of the difficulty to isolate any impact contributed by the land use in question. T. F. Green is among many factors that may or may not have some effect on property values. We know of no way to establish any connection, let alone measure and evaluate it.

Education: Interruption and Test Scores

Aircraft noise interference with classroom activities and learning has been the subject of much recent research. The results between studies on this subject have had conflicting results, as such no definitive link between aircraft noise and student performance levels can be made. Student performance levels will not be assessed in this EIS.

Regarding the referenced Robertson School letter, we have obtained FAA approval to insulate the school, design is complete and if bids are favorable construction should be accomplished this summer.



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Other Issues: Economic Impact, Transportation, Culture, Community, Preservation & Other Issues

The economic impact of the airport will be assessed and discussed in the Induced Socioeconomic section of the Environmental Consequences chapter of the EIS. Induced socioeconomic effects occurring from the airport-related impacts on surrounding communities include the economic impact of the airport, aircraft delay reduction benefits, and population movement and growth. RIAC will soon initiate an update to the 1998 *Rhode Island Airport Economic Impact Study*.

With respect to transportation issues, potential impacts to the level of service (LOS) at specific intersections will be assessed in the air quality and surface transportation sections of the EIS. Delays and LOS on the roads around T. F. Green Airport will be evaluated against existing and future demand as part of the Master Plan. This analysis will determine which roadways and intersections need improvement. The Master Plan will also look at various options to improve the roadway system around T. F. Green.

The study area of the Master Plan extends north from the Main Avenue/Post Road intersection, to the Post Road and Airport Road intersection. Airport Road is included from Post Road, east to the Hade Court/Etta Street intersection, northeast of the airport. The roadway capacity analysis and recommendations for the study area will be made available to the City of Warwick and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to assist in their planning efforts outside of this area.

Because the two studies are underway simultaneously, a tremendous amount of relevant data, information, and analysis will become available upon their completion. We want to take advantage of this opportunity to invite you to work with RIAC as you address planning for compatible land uses. We look forward to your continued participation and input as the planning process for T. F. Green moves forward.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Cheston
Executive Director

Pc: SRC

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