

**T. F. Green Airport Master Plan**  
**Study Resource Committee**  
**Technical Subcommittee Meeting**

**Meeting Summary**  
**April 25, 2002**

Mary Soderstrum, Deputy Executive Director for RIAC, opened the meeting by thanking the subcommittee members for attending the first technical subcommittee meeting. She provided the following information:

- Traffic continues to recover but revenues will be tight for the next fiscal year. There still is a hiring freeze and RIAC is not undertaking very many new projects.
- Responding to newspaper and other reports about the home acquisition program, Ms. Soderstrum reported that \$10.5 million of RIAC funds/passenger facility charges has been spent in the last two years to acquire houses. There are currently 59 houses under contract. The schedule for completion of the current acquisition program has been slowed a little by the difficulty of finding comparable housing for sale in Rhode Island. She anticipates that the program will be completed within 90 days after its originally planned June 30 completion date.
- Sound insulation of homes is on schedule. The RIAC board approved two packages of assistance at its March meeting. Also, FAA has authorized the sound insulation of the Francis and Robertson schools, with construction scheduled to be complete in August. Sound insulation for a third school is under consideration. RIAC would like to insulate Holden. This does not meet FAA criteria but RIAC made a promise so they are proposing to insulate this school with RIAC funds. This may not make it through budgeting this year but it would be added next year.
- Update on Runway 16-34: Ms. Soderstrum reviewed the facts on crosswind Runway 16-34. The runway pavement is nearing the end of its twenty-year life span, with concrete falling apart and perhaps soon posing a safety hazard. When it is reconstructed, FAA will require that it be brought up to current design standards that call for two 1,000 by 500 foot runway safety areas that can support an aircraft in case of an overrun (but they do not have to be pavement). The current length of the runway is 6,100 feet. If the runway cannot be lengthened, the length of the runway safety areas will reduce the pavement area, and most commercial aircraft that are now accommodated will not be able to use it.

Several subcommittee members asked questions or made comments on this subject.

Q. Will RIAC consider Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS)?

A. Ms. Soderstrum indicated that RIAC is considering all possibilities from reconstructing the runway at its current length with safety areas, lengthening the runway to the same length as the main runway (7,200 feet - suggestion from the Part 150), and lengthening the runway to 7,600 feet (theoretical need calculated in the Master Plan). RIAC is considering a wide variety of options from relocating the airport to a full build out. Gail Lattrell of the FAA indicated that FAA will only consider EMAS (which involves the use of high energy absorbing materials to reduce the length of the safety area provided) if it is determined that it is not practicable to provide a standard safety area. If it can, then EMAS is not an option.

Q. Where does the 7,600-foot requirement come from?

A. It is based on the calculated required length of main runway (9,500 feet by 2020) and the FAA guidelines are that the crosswind runway length should be 80 percent of the main runway.

Q. Why has RIAC pursued wetlands legislation if RIAC has not yet decided what to do?

A. To maintain the crosswind runway length with full safety areas, the runway must extend into wetlands. Reducing the length of the crosswind would make the runway virtually unusable. Mayor Avedisian stated that he knows he can veto a runway extension into the wetlands in a January news article. RIAC moved forward because of this.

Q. What determines if a full safety area cannot practically be provided and that EMAS is needed? Are wetlands enough of a reason to state that a full safety area is not practicable?

A. Gail Lattrell said that full safety areas would be considered not practicable only if the wetlands cannot be mitigated.

John van Woensel, Landrum and Brown, initiated a discussion on the facility needs (he used the same PowerPoint presentation that was used in the evening full SRC meeting). He began by reviewing the forecast scenarios and the use of the Existing Role Medium scenario adopted by the RIAC Board and approved by the FAA for use in future planning. There were several questions on this topic.

Q. What is role of SRC in choosing a forecast? Why does RIAC choose the role instead of the SRC?

A. John van Woensel explained that RIAC is the airport sponsor. This goes back to the basic role of SRC. The SRC does not vote and its purpose is to provide input for RIAC to consider and make changes if appropriate. RIAC modified the forecasts, slowed down the process, and added a meeting in response to SRC input.

Gail Lattrell indicated that FAA looks at a forecast from a demand-based perspective – not what someone wants to happen – but what is most likely to occur. FAA looks at it from a regional perspective. The medium scenario was “conservative but real.”

- Q. Did the SRC get correspondence on both the low and medium forecasts being adopted? Both were reported as adopted, was that in the press or in the materials sent to the SRC?
- A. Adopting the low forecast was the Chairman of the Board's recommendation – this was reported in the media before the Board meeting. The Board then deliberated and decided to adopt the medium case and this is what we shared with the SRC. It is important to keep in mind that RIAC has not decided that it wants to plan for meeting the identified requirements – that is a future policy decision for the Board.

Mr. van Woensel then discussed the future airfield and terminal needs. Below is a summary of the questions and comments on this topic.

- Q. Is the 9,500-foot requirement for the length of the main runway a specific recommendation based on the medium forecast?
- A. The 9,500 feet is not a recommendation but rather a finding based on the aircraft fleet and numbers expected in the medium scenario forecast for 2020.
- Q. Is the 80 percent standard for the crosswind runway length an FAA standard? How does this go with extending Runway 16-34 to same length as the main runway?
- A. It is an FAA guideline. When aircraft cannot use the main runway due to winds, they need sufficient length to land and takeoff on the crosswind runway.
- Q. What happens if T. F. Green's crosswind length was equal (i.e. 100 percent) to the main runway? Is that acceptable?
- A. Gail Lattrell indicated that FAA would not have a problem with that. It is acceptable for an airport to exceed a requirement unless it is too expensive or not needed. FAA would support lengthening Runway 16-34 to the same length as the main runway if it were justified environmentally.
- It was noted that the 80 percent guideline in the study reflects the calculated requirement for the future length of the main runway.
- Q. Would FAA support the extension of Runway 5R-23L to 9,500 feet and leaving Runway 16-34 at 6,100 feet?
- A. FAA's concern is if the forecast fleet can be served on the proposed runway length. If an aircraft type has more than 500 operations per year at an airport, it should be used to determine runway length requirements. FAA most likely would recommend increasing the length of Runway 16-34.

One citizen member noted that he does not feel there is a lot of public opposition to the Runway 16-34 safety areas, but that he believes there would be mass opposition to extending the main runway. Another citizen member agreed with this assessment.

Gail Lattrell noted that FAA would look at main Runway 5R-23L separately. John Elsoffer suggested that RIAC help the public understand that Runway 5R-23L is a longer-term issue that is independent from the more immediate crosswind runway issue.

Mary Soderstrum and John van Woensel noted that it is not known when 9,500 feet is needed because it depends on actual future demand but it is probably 10-15 years away. However, just because it may not be needed in the next five years, does not mean the issue goes away, unless the anticipated traffic does not materialize.

Q. Table III.1-2 shows the percent of heavy aircraft in T. F. Green's fleet. Does this include nighttime cargo? Were the airlines' plans taken into account?

A. The table includes all operations. The aircraft that the airlines have on order were researched and considered in developing the fleet mix forecast.

Q. If capacity is based on two things – the number of aircraft and the size of those aircraft – then any runway extension allows bigger planes to use Green. This will be opposed.

A. Weight or size are not the only things that drive longer length requirements. For example, the B-727 is a poor performer when it comes to runway length. It is smaller and lighter than many of the new generation aircraft that require shorter lengths. Much of the requirement for increased length comes from the same aircraft that operate today but for longer distances.

Q. How many airports have reached unacceptable delays and sent traffic to other regional airports?

A. LAX is trying to do this. Several other airports have tried or are trying, but even if some traffic has gone to other airports, the big airport is still busy and congested. Boston is another example of this.

Q. Diverting traffic to other airports is happening in New England with Boston, why can't Green follow the same strategy?

A. It is an alternative that we'll look at. It is definitely a regional issue. But airports do not control where airlines offer service. For example, at O'Hare, other area airports want more air service, there is even a proposed new airport, but the airlines will not relocate or offer duplicate service. Gary-Chicago Airport has plans for significant expansion, but in the meantime, the airport is severely underserved today. Midway does not do away with growth at O'Hare but it does off load some traffic.

Q. Ten years ago no one anticipated the growth that occurred.

A. The fast growth happened because of Southwest. If Southwest didn't initiate service at Bradley and Manchester we would have problems at Green. Sarasota is a good example. They have a great facility but Southwest doesn't operate there, they operate at Tampa which is congested. The "Southwest effect" creates new demand.

Q. If airlines can't grow here they may go elsewhere. Providing facilities allows community problems to grow. If demand is capped, that could stop growth.

A. It doesn't appear that there is another suitable location for another airport but even if there were, it couldn't become operational within 20 years. Demand will probably continue to grow past 20 years and there may be sufficient demand

even if another airport was available (Worcester was briefly discussed as an airport with available capacity that is trying to attract new service but having a hard time). Today, the airlines most likely would not serve a new airport.

Q. If it is not possible to grow Green and Manchester then the need for a new airport could be hastened.

A. The constrained analysis in the forecast chapter found that delays would reach 6-8 minutes/flight in 20 years – this is undesirable but not necessarily unacceptable to users and the airlines would continue to serve Green regardless of the increasing delays. Several existing U.S. airports operate beyond eight minutes of delay (Atlanta, O’Hare, Newark, and LaGuardia).

Q. What is typical hourly capacity of one runway?

A. 55-60 operations per hour

Q. Can the terminal accommodate heavies?

A. There are L1011 charters scheduled for this summer.

Q. Why are airlines allowed to schedule above capacity?

A. Airports in the U.S. do not have the authority to keep airlines from scheduling flights as they wish. At Logan, Delta has several departures scheduled for the same time – during the evening peak – yet these aircraft cannot possibly depart simultaneously. That is an airline decision. Massport has tried to seek voluntary efficiencies but under the current system, they are powerless in this situation.

Q. Why can’t we limit demand so we don’t have to build more facilities?

A. Mary Soderstrum indicated that RIAC has not made any decisions about building more facilities. John van Woensel restated that RIAC does not have any jurisdiction to limit demand.

Gail Lattrell stated that FAA would prefer to build a new airport but it is not feasible so they have to look at what is best to do. FAA needs to assess what is responsible, practical, and safe. Mary Soderstrum indicated that we are at the stage in the process where we put the ultimate scenarios on table – showing what is justified by the numbers. Then RIAC will determine if it is possible to provide the required facilities. RIAC will ask the SRC to help develop criteria to evaluate future concepts.

Q. RIAC needs to take into account that citizens are more concerned with how much they can take.

A. Mary Soderstrum indicated that RIAC wants and needs to hear the concerns of the citizens and that they will be considered in the decision.

Q. No one anticipated the growth at Green and Manchester.

A. The forecast looked at how to stop growth but RIAC has no jurisdiction to do so.

Q. If the Federal government wants to bail out the airlines, won’t they try to regulate the airlines?

A. There is no indication of this so far.

Q. We don't hear about curfews for certain types of aircraft anymore, why not?

A. Now that all Stage II aircraft have been phased out of operation, that is no longer an issue.

Q. Has there ever been an example where an airport has made no improvements and people stop using the airport?

A. No.

Q. People in this region have more opportunity to go elsewhere, they have more choices.

A. Worcester may be a feasible alternative for the airlines in 20 years if RIAC makes no improvements at Green. But in the meantime, we know most growth will still materialize at Green.

Q. The less we do at Green, the more pressure there is to use Worcester. Rhode Island has a lot of general aviation facilities like Quonset with potential for passenger service.

A. We are not saying it won't happen but that it will not happen overnight. This is likely not a short-term or even 20-year solution.

RIAC Director of Planning, Gregg Wollard, gave an example of the Wilson Bridge in Washington D.C. No one wanted to spend money on a new Wilson Bridge because there was an alternate route. But despite congestion, people wouldn't use the alternate route, traffic kept increasing, and now they are improving the bridge at double the cost.

Q. We wouldn't be in this situation if RIAC had not expanded the terminal in the 1990s and Southwest didn't initiate service.

A. Some other low-fare carrier could have come. Regarding the terminal expansion, maybe the expansion caused Southwest to come a year or so sooner than they otherwise would have. But they probably would have come anyway because the market exists.

John van Woensel stated that many of these alternatives would be discussed in the evening session. Just because something is not feasible within 20 years doesn't mean it is not viable and shouldn't be pursued along with short-term improvements.

Q. Will terminal requirements increase with new security requirements?

A. RIAC is dealing with this now. They have to add 10 Explosive Detection Systems (which are large and weigh as much as a pickup truck). The ultimate size of the machines may shrink in the future. There also will be more security checkpoints. The overall size predicted in the chapter is probably valid but the requirements for individual spaces may change (i.e. how the interior of the terminal is configured).

The meeting concluded with Mary Soderstrum thanking the participants and indicating that RIAC will hold another technical subcommittee meeting on the afternoon of the next SRC meeting.

## List of Attendees

### **SRC Members and Alternate**

Heather Lees, Landrum & Brown  
Tom Celona, Thrifty Car Rental  
Mary Soderstrum, RIAC  
Jim Flanagan, Citizen Representative Ward 9 Warwick  
Thomas Klin, Landrum & Brown  
John Elsoffer, Citizen  
John van Woensel, Landrum & Brown  
Michelle Gallo, Landrum & Brown  
Gregg Wollard, RIAC  
Gail Lattrell, FAA  
Kevin Flynn, City of Cranston