

**T. F. Green Airport  
Master Plan and Environmental Impact Assessment**

**Study Resource Committee**

**DRAFT Meeting Summary  
March 5, 2002**

**Introduction**

Suzanne Orenstein, facilitator, opened the meeting by welcoming several new members and explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to review the analysis of the impacts of September 11 and SRC comments on the aviation forecasts. Mike Cheston, RIAC Executive Director, welcomed committee members and provided several airport updates. He also noted that this was a special meeting held in response to SRC requests for additional time to understand the forecasts, how the SRC's comments were incorporated in the forecasts, and the impacts of September 11 on T. F. Green's future. He further noted:

- A forecast is a prediction of future events, with some educated guessing, and tempered with input from the community. RIAC views the forecast as a method of estimating trigger points for airport development needed to meet future demand.
- RIAC has taken steps recently to obtain more flexibility in meeting FAA required safety standards for Runway 16/34 by filing legislation that would change rules governing wetland permitting. Adding runway safety areas to Runway 16/34 will not increase capacity, as some have argued, because T. F. Green will continue to have intersecting runways, which prevents the use of both runways at the same time.
- RIAC has begun working with Warwick to coordinate on land use and comprehensive planning, and will continue to do so.
- RIAC has heard from Senator Reed about citizen concerns about easements that have been required as part of the soundproofing program. RIAC is investigating what can be done to address these concerns, and expects to be able to report on this in the next few days
- RIAC is appreciative of the efforts of all SRC members in working through the Master Planning process. RIAC and concerned citizens in the SRC process won't always agree, but must work together to achieve a master plan that meets community and airport interests.

Mary Soderstrum, Deputy Executive Director for Engineering and Planning, updated the SRC on January air traffic statistics, noting the January 2002 was 5.33% lower than January 2001. She attributed the slower traffic pace to the continuing decline in the economy, with business travelers still traveling less than in past years. Mary also outlined for the SRC the status of the master planning process:

- The inventory chapter of the plan is complete.
- A number of forecasts have been drafted, producing predictions of passenger growth over the next twenty years that range between 9.1 million and 13 million in 2020.
- RIAC staff is still reviewing the various forecast scenarios.
- The RIAC Board received the recent forecast materials that the SRC received, and plans to select one forecast for planning purposes at their March 20 meeting.
- FAA will review the forecast after the Board adopts it.
- Once the FAA has accepted the forecast as reasonable, RIAC will then move forward with looking at what the forecast means for future facility needs. The facility requirements analysis will become the basis for outlining alternatives for a 20-year plan, and the SRC will discuss the requirements and potential alternatives at three meetings, scheduled for April 25, June 6, and July 11.
- After the alternatives are evaluated, the EIS will begin to analyze the impacts of any short-term projects that may be required.

### **Feedback on Quality of Life Issues**

Mike Cheston had provided SRC members with a written response to the draft Interim Quality of Life Report submitted at the January meeting. A letter from the Cranston Planning Department was distributed questioning RIAC's plan for providing the data on quality of life that was requested by the subcommittee. Duane Clinker, chair of the Quality of Life Subcommittee, asked Mr. Cheston if RIAC's written response was the complete response to the interim report. Mr. Cheston replied that it was, and that RIAC was not willing to provide financial support for a study of quality of life issues because it was unclear how these issues could be studied and he would rather put scarce resources into an effort that would be more useful and less inconclusive.

Jerry Flynn spoke about serious disappointment on the part of the citizen representatives with the responses to their concerns about community capacity and quality of life issues. He read a statement, which can be obtained from the Master Planning web site, noting that:

- The SRC process is "flawed, prejudiced and contrary to the best interests of the communities."

- RIAC has not demonstrated to the community that it is willing to work to plan development at the airport in a way that achieves a properly sized airport for the Warwick community, but rather allows the market demand perspective to dominate the discussions.
- Citizens do not believe that RIAC does not view growth as a foregone conclusion; particularly after the proposal to change state legislation to take away the veto power of the local government over wetland permits.
- Community representatives want an evaluation of community capacity, not just airport capacity, and need in depth, independent evaluations of economic issues and quality of life factors.
- RIAC has not provided information that already exists about air quality and other quality of life measures, and has refused to fund a health effects study.
- Citizen representatives refuse to participate further in the SRC and will return only after RIAC releases all requested information to the public, proceeds with air quality studies and other health studies prior to planning decision-making, and modifies the planning agenda to consider the community's capacity to bear airport growth prior to consideration of drafting proposals to support growth.

At this point all of the citizen representatives, except the representative from Ward 9 in Warwick, left the meeting.

### **Presentation and Discussion of Forecast Modifications**

John van Woensel, Project Manager for the Master Plan with Landrum and Brown, updated the SRC about changes that were made in the T. F. Green forecasts based on an analysis of September 11 impacts, newly available economic data, and also on SRC member comments. He explained that Landrum and Brown, with Edwards & Kelcey and RIAC, reviewed predicted changes in the airline industry and in the economy as a result of the impacts of September 11. A copy of the presentation slides is posted on the Master Plan web site ([www.pvd-ri.org](http://www.pvd-ri.org).)

Among the major findings in the update and analysis were the following points.

- The 9-11 attacks are unprecedented, but looking at the past does provide some insight. Over the past 40 years, the general trend in air travel has been upward with times of declines or slow growth typically followed by robust recovery.
- Since September 11, national airline industry trends have shown gradual recovery, from a 32 percent decline in passengers traveling in September to a 12 percent decline in December.

- T. F. Green experienced a 5% decrease in seats available in the last three months of 2001, while the top 25 airports saw a 13 percent average decline. This may be due to the presence of Southwest Airlines, which did not cut its seat availability after September 11, and to the fact that T. F. Green is not a hub airport. Also, Green may be attracting some additional travelers who are avoiding Boston Logan.
- While the airline industry will suffer some heavy losses which may force some companies to go out of business, Southwest will probably not be one of those, given its stability and 29 years of constant profitability. Southwest's strong operation at T. F. Green will minimize airline industry adverse impacts at Green.
- The result of the review of the forecasts for T. F. Green shows that for the period 2000-5005, growth may be lower than was predicted in the original (pre-September 11) forecast, with a gradual return in subsequent five-year periods to the growth predicted prior to Sept. 11. That means that the average annual compound growth rate for the medium case scenario would be 2.5% through 2005, 4.2% between 2005 and 2010, 3.9% between 2010-2015, and 3.8% for 2015-2020. The average growth rate over the twenty years is estimated to be 3.6% annually. Twenty-year growth would be similar but slightly higher than the pre 9-11 forecast.
- Mr. van Woensel noted that forecasts are not hard and fast, but the best predictions obtainable through economic data, realistic analysis and modeling, and that the actual growth rates in passengers using T. F. Green would probably vary from these estimates. That is why identifying trigger points, as a signal for the need for additional facilities is a good approach.

In response to this presentation, several comments and questions were raised.

- The Air Transport Association has seen only slight revisions to forecasts prepared prior to September 11 in decision-making processes with the FAA at other airports. They also are seeing that the use of regional jets may result in more operations to carry the same number of passengers previously carried on larger jets, so operation increases should be evaluated, as well as passenger growth. ATA supported acceptance of the forecasts as reasonable.
- A study conducted by the Mitre Corporation showed a 16% reduction in operations nationwide since September 11. The largest declines were in NY, DC, and two major west coast airports.
- In response to a question about whether airlines will go back to larger aircraft as traffic picks up, Mr. van Woensel noted that regional jets are the newest airplanes that airlines have, and so they probably will continue to be used, though they may be replaced by larger planes on certain busy routes if the seat demand exceeds their capacity.

- Question: Can regional jets operate on Runway 16/34? Answer: Under many conditions they can. But to regularly operate on a runway, they need approximately 6,500 feet.
- Question: Does the forecast include regional jets only in the short term or on a continuing basis? Answer: They are in the fleet mix as a continuing element, since many airlines have just switched to using them on short haul flights.
- Question: Are regional jets quieter than 737s? Answer: There are many models of 737s, including some newer, very quiet ones. We will investigate and provide that information to you. In general, regional jets are very quiet.<sup>1</sup>
- Question: Could you show how traffic has declined at the other New England airports since September 11? Answer: Yes, we will provide you with that information.<sup>2</sup>
- Question: Did you update the catchment area for T. F. Green since September 11? Answer: The origination point for T. F. Green travelers did change after September 11, but it appears to be returning to where it was prior to September 11. We will try to obtain information from the most recent license plate survey.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. van Woensel concluded his presentation with a review of the extensive changes in the forecast chapter made by Landrum and Brown in response to comments received on the forecast and in the initial discussion of the chapter with the SRC. He concluded by noting that while it might be tempting to lower the forecast in response to community concerns, underplanning would actually be worse for the community because it underestimates potential airport impacts.

### **Runway Safety Area Clarification**

Gail Lattrell from FAA clarified where the FAA stands on the runway safety area requirements for Runway 16/34. She noted that FAA is very unwavering in its requirement that every runway must have a runway safety area that is 1,000 feet by 500 feet and capable of supporting an airplane or emergency vehicle. There is no waiver or exemption from this requirement. If however FAA determines that it is not possible to achieve the full 1,000-foot safety area at an airport, a modification of standards, approved by the Administrator, would be required. The requirement for a full safety area is applied when when plans are discussed to reconstruct existing runways. In order for T. F. Green to reconstruct Runway 16/34, an EIS will be required, and it takes several years to conduct an EIS and complete construction. While that process is

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<sup>1</sup> Answer obtained after the meeting: Regional jets in general are quieter than 737s (particularly the older models) due to their smaller size. The new generation 737s are louder than the regional jets but there is not as much of a differential because the new 737s have newer, quieter engines.

<sup>2</sup> A summary of traffic at the other New England airports is included with the mailing for the April 25, 2002 SRC meeting.

<sup>3</sup> After the meeting, RIAC determined that the license plate survey information requested is the proprietary information of New England Parking, manager of the RIAC parking facilities. RIAC has repeatedly requested permission to distribute the information, however, New England Parking has yet to respond as of 4-10-02.

going forward, FAA allows airports to repave or stabilize runways on a temporary, short-term basis. FAA has said that a temporary repavement project, which does not require an EIS or runway safety area action, is a possible scenario for Runway 16/34. In response to a question about what is the definition of short-term, Ms. Lattrell said a few years, definitely less than five.

RIAC explained that it saw the need to move forward with repaving and then with reconstruction of Runway 16/34 in the near future. The decision about whether to shorten the runway for the safety areas or apply for a permit to expand the runway safety area into wetlands will come up soon, hopefully during the Master Plan process. John van Woensel pointed out that runway safety areas do not have to be pavement; they can be turf or some other material. Mike Cheston noted that even if the safety areas were not paved, they would still likely go into the wetlands. RIAC asked FAA to put its understanding of the leeway that Green would have regarding the time table for repavement and reconstruction in writing. FAA agreed.

### **Final Comments**

Several SRC members expressed their disappointment that the citizen representatives had left the meeting. Mike Cheston noted that while he was disappointed, he would work with the cities of Warwick and Cranston to find ways of representing their citizens, either with those who left or with others. He noted that FAA requires only one public meeting during a Master Plan process, and that RIAC had gone considerably beyond the requirements to try to include community concerns in the process, and that he would continue to do so.

The facilitator reminded members that the next meeting would be on April 25, and thanked everyone for participation in the meeting.

## List of Attendees

### **SRC Members and Alternate**

Cully Beasley, FAA Providence ATCT  
Robert Blaikie, FedEx  
E. Colby Cameron, RIAC Board  
Duane Clinker, Cranston Representative  
Lindsay Commeau, FAA Providence ATCT  
Michael Conaboy, Delta Airlines & Airline Pilots Association  
William DePasquale, City of Warwick Planning Department  
Robert Eagan, Warwick – Ward 1  
Dave Field, Hertz Corporation  
James Flanagan, Warwick – Ward 9  
Gerald Flynn, Warwick – Ward 7  
Charles Gaffney, RIAC Board  
Ron Gagnon, Dept. of Environmental Management  
Scott Godfrey, Air Transport Association of America  
Patti Goldstein, RIAC  
Raleigh Jenkins, C.A.N.  
Karen Kalunian, Warwick – Ward 1  
Tom Klin, Landrum & Brown  
Stephen Klinger, RI Pilots Association  
Bob Lamoureux, Warwick – Ward 3  
Gail Lattrell, FAA  
Norma Malachowski, C.A.N.  
Hope Pilkington, Cranston Representative  
Dave Mills, Warwick – Ward 7  
John O'Brien, RI Statewide Planning  
Anne Saccoccio, Warwick – Ward 4  
Vince Scarano, FAA  
Paul Silva, Dept. of Transportation  
Mary Soderstrum, RIAC  
David Spengler, Thrifty Car Rental  
Rob Tingle, Jr., Warwick Station Redevelopment Agency

### **Public**

Sarah Arnold  
David Crompter  
Pam Doyl  
Gloria L. Duggow  
Barb Frittsche  
Lincoln Hubbard  
Bob Martin  
Jim Miklas  
Michael Minnie  
Dan Murphy  
J. Quintes  
Michelle Ricci  
Matt Savone  
Ahmed Shihadeh  
James Zisiades

### **Consultants**

Bill Richardson, Edwards & Kelcey