



BILL FINCH
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TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
TO THE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 4, 2009

RE: SB 563, AN ACT EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON REALIGNMENT BY
THE STATE OF ROUTE 113 IN STRATFORD.

Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to address you regarding a proposed piece of legislation under your consideration. Respectfully, I am here today to oppose Proposed Bill No. 563, which would extend the Moratorium on movement by the State of Connecticut of Route 113 in Stratford for an additional year until April 15, 2010.

The goal of this Moratorium is to inhibit the ability of the City of Bridgeport to modify the open space at the end of Runway 6/24 to accommodate necessary safety improvements required by the Federal Aviation Administration (the "FAA"). These FAA safety directives involve the relocation of Route 113 to accommodate enhanced safety zones to protect the public. The installation of these safety zones is solely a public policy and safety issue; and does not involve any runway expansion at Sikorsky Airport.

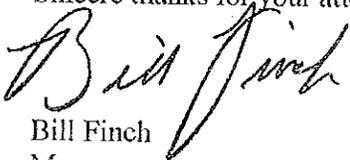
Sadly, on April 27, 1994, a fatal airline crash occurred at that end of Runway 6/24 resulting in the deaths of eight people, and leaving a ninth severely injured. The resulting National Transportation Safety Board ("NTSB") investigation of this accident recommended the relocation of Route 113 and improvement of the safety area. As public officials, it is our responsibility to ensure the well-being and safety of the general public whenever and wherever possible. Extending this moratorium is a vote against public safety, and refusal to allow construction of these safety improvements is an abdication of public responsibility.

The Town of Stratford is citing certain provisions of a 1978 Agreement between the Town and the City of Bridgeport as justification for the State Legislature to adopt Bill No. 563. Bridgeport and Stratford interpret the 1978 Agreement differently, and those contract differences, if necessary, will be resolved appropriately in a court of law. Suffice it to say, the City of Bridgeport denies that such Agreement in any way, shape, or

form limits its ability or obligation to provide adequate public safety at its Airport. Any other contractual interpretation would be legally unenforceable as a violation of public policy, and is federally pre-empted. As the Honorable U.S. District Court Judge Janet Hall stated in an October 24, 2008 ruling in the matter of Tweed-New Haven Airport v. Town of East Haven, Connecticut, et. al., Civil Action No. 3:08-CV-597 (JCH), (page 11) "Congress intended to occupy and regulate the entire field of airline safety, including runways."

As the City of Bridgeport Chief Executive and Director of the Airport Commission, I'm responsible for managing the City's resources including Sikorsky Memorial Airport. The current moratorium is having a deleterious effect on this particular city asset, and the safety of those using the airport. Sikorsky Memorial Airport should be regarded as a regional asset. But the longer the moratorium is in effect and without the safety zone improvements it will never reach its full potential. I will continue to work diligently with the FAA to accomplish this goal.

Sincere thanks for your attention,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Finch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Finch
Mayor