Transportation Committee Public Hearing

Wednesday, March 05, 2014

Testimony on SB 339 An Act Concerning Tweed-New Haven Airport

Richard Jacob, Yale University and Member of the Tweed Airport Authority Board

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera, Senator Boucher, Representative Scriber, and Members of the Committee – thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of SB 339, "An Act Concerning Tweed Airport." I am testifying on behalf of Yale University, as well as a Member of the Board of the Tweed Airport Authority.

The two projects addressed in SB 339 – the removal of trees and the paving of the existing runway safety areas – will improve safety, enable commercial air service to operate more efficiently, and contribute over the long run to economic growth in Greater New Haven region. Naturally, they are high priorities for the Airport Authority Board.

The management of Tweed Airport is actively engaged, with valuable support from the Department of Transportation, in removing trees that obstruct the takeoff and landing approaches to the Airport. The additional funding would help to complete that important project.

Paving the existing runway safety areas would increase the length of the usable runway without any change in the Airport's current footprint. A longer runway offers several benefits. It would provide a larger margin of safety during takeoff and landing. It would enable commercial flights to take off with every seat occupied in all weather, increasing access to flights. (That is not always possible with the current runway.) In addition, it would allow planes to gain altitude earlier, thereby reducing noise levels in areas surrounding the airport.

The paving project will also improve the sustainability of commercial air service at Tweed as commercial airlines retire turboprop aircraft and move to small, efficient regional jets.

Improvements to transportation infrastructure, including safety upgrades at Tweed, are needed to help sustain economic growth in the Greater New Haven region. This area is one of the most dynamic parts of the State. The entertainment and cultural institutions are strong, and attract over 800,000 visitors annually. The bioscience industry is healthy and growing, as seen in the construction of 100 College Street and the move of Alexion back to the center of New Haven. Moreover, downtown New Haven is an attractive place to live – it has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the country for residential real estate. Having a safer, more functional Tweed Airport will contribute to the growth of New Haven.

I respectfully urge the Committee to approve SB 339.