

February 23, 2019

Re: **H.B. No. 7143** - AN ACT CONCERNING THE LENGTH OF RUNWAY 2-20 AT TWEED-NEW HAVEN AIRPORT.

To the Chairs of the Transportation Committee,

I am writing this testimony in opposition to the elimination of the restriction on the length of Tweed's runway. This is not good for the city of New Haven or the State of Connecticut.

1. In 2009 Tweed airport made an agreement with the cities of New Haven and East Haven, as well as residents of the neighborhoods around the airport, that creation of runway safety zones would be permitted but future expansion not. The current plan violates this agreement. Agreements are made to be kept - not torn up after a few years.

2. Tweed is not economically viable and expansion will not change that. MIT's International Center for Air Transportation has performed a series of studies in the last 7 years examining small airports. These studies have concluded that commercial service will continue to decline at these airports - no matter what the airports do - as the industry has fundamentally changed how it does business. Along with this, the center found that small airports within 1 to 2 hours of larger airports will have the toughest time remaining viable. Passengers are more than willing to drive for better service and cheaper fares.

These issues can be clearly seen in the decline in passenger traffic at the airports close to Tweed. Providence has lost almost a million passengers since 2005. White Plains, Stewart and MacArthur, on Long Island, have all seen 6 figure declines in passengers over the last decade. Bradley has lost traffic as well. Allowing Tweed to expand its runway will not change the airplane environment that makes small airports noncompetitive. It will merely mean wasted resources.

The state of California found a similar problem with its small airports. Passengers were willing to drive 1 to 2 hours in heavy traffic to use San Diego and Los Angeles airports in order to have better service and fares. Two hours in this area means that Tweed is also competing with JFK and La Guardia - it cannot beat the service or prices these two airports offer, much less the service or prices of Bradley, White Plains or T. Green in Rhode Island. New Haven, despite its mayor's arguments, is not in an airport desert. In fact, New Haven is well served by national standards of air transport. Moreover, allowing Tweed to draw passengers, if it can, from Bradley, places Bradley's future at risk.

3. Tweed over the years has consistently argued that one more expansion will allow it to finally be viable. See these articles on the last expansion:

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/city_to_state_tweeds_time_is_runing_out/ and

<https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/New-era-of-cooperation-takes-flight-at-Tweed-as-1162>

3246.php.

Why should we now believe it? This is especially true when one considers the false and misleading statements the airport has made about its catchment area and how many people are in it. Mayor Harp in February 2018 stated - "We have one of the most underserved markets in the country — 1.2 million in the Greater New Haven region" and "Over 4 million passengers live closer to Tweed than any other airport." Connecticut has just over 3 million citizens - how is it possible that 4 million live closer to Tweed than any other airport? New Haven is also not the most under served market in the US. Having two airports within 1 hour driving distance means that New Haven is actually well served. This is also why, as noted above, Tweed cannot draw enough passenger demand to entice airlines to come. If Tweed is willing to lie about the number of passengers living close to it - then why should we believe any information Tweed, or the mayor of New Haven, provides about expansion and its benefits?

4. Tweed is surrounded by a residential neighborhood. Larger planes landing at Tweed create a real danger for the neighborhood. And, no, the airport did not exist before the neighborhood. Settlement in Morris Cove began before the American Revolution. The homes closest to the seawall in the cove, and airport as well, are in the process of being designated an historic neighborhood. Many of these homes predate the airport by decades. Only 5 years ago a two engine plane crashed destroying two homes and killing two children as well as the pilot and passenger of the plane. Imagine if this had been a large Airbus or Boeing. These are the dream aircraft that Tweed would like to offer service. These are completely inappropriate for an airport embedded in residential neighborhoods. Expanding the runway will enable these types of aircraft to begin landing at Tweed raising the danger level considerably.

5. Tweed sits in a coastal flood plain. Any development will face the forces of climate change. Seas are expected to rise at least 1 foot by 2050 along the Connecticut coast. This rise will increase the chances of major flooding during nor'easters and hurricanes. Currently, homes in the neighborhood have FEMA restrictions on the value of improvements that can be made. These restrictions require that above a certain level of improvement a home must be raised to prevent flooding. None of what Tweed is proposing is climate resilient. The current runway is currently well within the high risk flood area as determined by FEMA. Most land at the airport has a lower elevation than the runway - meaning it is even more exposed to coastal flooding and storm surges. Thus, investing in Tweed, and allowing it to expand its runway, is nonsensical. We will be encouraging more investment in areas that will be under ever more severe threat due to climate change.

6. This also plays directly into Tweed's cynical master plan. Stage two of the plan was completed with the runway safety zones in 2009. However, the plan made clear that the next step was to pave the safety zones, stage 3, and that something would be done to accomplish this. Stage 4 is to then ask for new safety zones, expanding the airport beyond its current boundaries. It is quite clear, that despite Tweed saying it is not trying to expand, that it is. This bill is a part of that attempt.

7. Finally, last year when Tweed attempted to have the restriction on runway length removed,

the Mayor of New Haven and other state officials stated that any elimination would also come with some type of compensation for the neighborhood. This bill offers nothing to the neighborhood except the prospect of more noise, more traffic and more pollution. Morris Cove is already home to several of the most polluting organizations in the city - a power plant, harbor, sewage treatment plant and the current airport. Allowing Tweed to expand without any form of compensation adds to the pollution problems the neighborhood already faces. This is a clear violation of the norms of environmental justice.

For all of these reasons. I ask your committee not to approve the elimination on the restriction on Tweed's runway length.

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