

To The Transportation Committee

My name is Vincent Perrelli.

From 1991-1996, I served on the Board of Airport Commissioners at Tweed-New Haven Regional Airport. During that time, the airport enjoyed considerable success, due in large part to the jet service offered by United Air Lines from New Haven to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

Indeed, 1991 boardings at Tweed went to 132,000, a figure previously unattained at the airport due to the "jet-prop" aircraft that were the mainstay of commercial airline service. Many passengers avoided using Tweed because of the jet-props.

With American Airlines' introduction of regional jet service to Philadelphia in the fall of 2017, and the addition of jet service to Charlotte last year, Tweed's boarding figures are growing once again

And yet, even with smaller jet aircraft, weight restrictions have forced a number of passengers to be denied boarding due to Tweed's limited runway length.

An extended runway--within New Haven's city limits--would not only make the airport more navigable and safer to contemporary aircraft, but the additional Passenger Facilities Charges paid by more passengers would increase the airport's ability to operate with greater economic efficiency.

The airport was the subject of two "agreements," poorly thought out, between New Haven and East Haven, one in 1983 and one in 2009. The 2009 agreement virtually throttled the airport by placing restrictions not only on the runway length, but on passenger boardings and parking, the two chief sources of any airport's revenues.

And while it was never admitted publicly, the airport's limited service was suspected as a reason the biotech firm Alexion left New Haven. Pretty embarrassing for a city that positions itself as a "biotech incubator."

It's my belief that the airport's limited operating capacity is also causing Southern Connecticut travelers to take their money out of state, with Fairfield County travelers opting to fly from the Westchester County Airport, and New London County travelers going to Providence's T. F. Green Airport. When United was flying out of Tweed, the airport was pulling in customers from as far west as Norwalk and as far east as New London. Can the state afford to let that money go neighboring states?

I'm sure many Southern Connecticut travelers have flown to other U.S. cities (from Bradley and New York) and have seen the vast improvements in *their* airports, and returning home asking themselves, "What's wrong with New Haven?" "Why don't they 'get it'?"

The reason they don't "get it" is due to a pathetically small bunch of homeowners who may or may not have knowingly bought houses near an airport that has existed before they were born. And, while these people say Tweed is a "money loser," they actively oppose any attempt by the airport to remove itself from operating subsidies that come from the very taxes its opponents complain about paying.

"We have Bradley!," they say. "It's only an hour away!," they say. It was a very snowy day in Hartford when the Committee conducted its hearing, wasn't it? Considering how early one would have to leave Southern Connecticut to get to Bradley on a good day, think of how much earlier they'd have to leave with the inclement weather that comes with living in Connecticut. And pray that there's no jack-knifed tractor-trailer along the way.

One opponent even likened Tweed to "global warming." Really? An airport with three flights a day is a contributor to global warming? With three major air hubs with many more flights 75-90 miles away?

As for being a "threat" to wetlands, the airport rerouted Morris Creek as part of a runway overrun safety project with *no* noticeable impact on the surrounding wetlands.

Tweed has gone the distance in working with the surrounding neighborhood, from installing new flood gates to alleviate Morris Creek's flooding of neighborhood streets to the Authority adding representatives from East Haven, the town in which half the airport lies, to undertaking soundproofing those homes identified as lying in its operating "footprint." Quite frankly, there's not much more they can do.

Governor Lamont has promised the state a 21st Century transportation infrastructure.

For the three counties of Southern Connecticut, it's not going to happen with a World War II-era airport. Please recommend House Bill 7143 to the General Assembly. You will be doing a great service to one-and-one-half-million Connecticut residents, versus the handful that wish to stop it.

Thank you for your time.

Vincent Perrelli