

Development Watch Inc

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10th August 2006

Draft Master Plan Comments,
Sunshine Coast Airport,
Friendship Av,
MARCOOLA QLD 4564

Dear Sirs,

We wish to make comment on the Sunshine Coast Airport Master Plan, Preliminary Draft Report, dated Feb 2006, during the Public Consultation period.

Paragraph headings follow the Airbiz Report.

1. Introduction

Having read the Report, we consider it contains misleading and fundamentally incorrect assumptions, which render this Submission of academic interest only and which should not be used to decide any major changes in infrastructure.

To adopt any one of the four new runway options would entail a major change to the physical and social status quo and to the detriment of all residents living in the region from Noosa to the Maroochy River and beyond. It is irresponsible in the extreme to even contemplate including so much of three suburbs in the flight path safety zone.

We accept that the Council own a valuable asset and should extract better value for our investment. There are many ways of doing this without extending any runway. The opportunity to construct an East/West runway was lost many years ago. The fact that Council has allowed dense development close to the Airport over a long period indicates they have not planned for any realistic expansion despite previous Plans and Reports.

2. Aviation Forecasts

Previous "expert" forecasts of passenger use for 1997 to 2000 have been proved to be wildly optimistic even at the level of the lowest estimates. This Report seems to be following the same trend. There is no detail where all the expected passengers will come from. Will they be domestic transfers or from home base in Eastern Seaboard cities or is there a component of overseas, including Asian, tourists involved?

The Sunshine Coast is not set up for overseas visitors nor is there attractions like at the Gold Coast or Cairns to attract them.

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This traditionally domestic, Australian family holiday location can only cope with limited increases. The Report says a wide range of factors dictates the passenger numbers, but the “blue sky” estimates appear to be accepted as the low base.

Over the period to 2020, new aircraft will be released to the market, which are more efficient and can carry a high payload whilst using short runways such as we now have. No runway change is needed. Any meaningful change in length must carry an increase in width, which even Airbiz says is not possible.

The essential problem for Council, if they are interested in increasing passenger numbers above the current level, is that the Airlines do not have sufficient arrivals to use the down time now evident around the so called, busy hour. A snap view of a day in August 2005 is not relevant to the usage of today nor during daylight saving periods interstate. Aircraft are still coming in at 9.0/10.00 pm or even later during the summer. We often drive to Brisbane to catch more convenient flights. While the Airlines insist on continuing the old “two airline” policy and arriving within a few minutes of each other, a wider spread of flight times seems unlikely.

It can only be assumed that the Airlines are unable to attract more passengers than the current numbers. If there is demand the airlines would fill it—poor demand indicates the traffic numbers have plateaued.

3. Aircraft Aprons

Expansion of the Aprons is unnecessary if the passenger demand is considerably below the aggressive estimates in the report. As the Report says, there is room for expansion in future years if flight numbers do actually increase to demand the expansion.

4. Passenger Terminal

In our view, the terminal cannot adequately cope with the current passenger traffic flow. We support the proposed changes if airline schedules cannot be adjusted to even out this flow.

5. Surface Access

The present car park cannot handle the current demand, especially as it appears non-residents use it as a convenient place to park at various times, whether or not the owners have caught an aircraft at the Airport. We support paid parking but with a 72 hr exemption for residents of Maroochy Shire.

The new road proposed to link to the motorway is essential to reduce traffic through Coolum and Pacific Paradise.

6. Runway Requirements

The Report makes it clear that no change is needed to the runways if the current aircraft systems are retained. We can see no reason to add to the runway in the foreseeable future (2015 and beyond). The current runway can deliver perfectly adequate service for the community and, since the upgrade of the runway surface recently at a cost of between \$5m and \$6m, airlines are able to land heavier gross weights per aircraft.

The suggestion to increase the length of the runway and extend the Public Safety Area over a large part of Maroola and a section of Pacific Paradise and expose many hundreds of

residents to the attendant crash hazard, is nothing short of totally irresponsible. This is not done at any other Airport we are aware of, even in the most built up areas of NSW and Victoria. There is little doubt that residents would take legal action against Council for a wide range of issues including loss of property values, increased noise causing loss of social amenity and breach of trust.

Those dedicated to land development at all cost, must be advised that the community of ratepayers do not want this unnecessary development. How the cost of any one of the Options would be absorbed, has not been explained by Council.

The conclusions of Airbiz appear reasonably clear—

- "... the existing length of Runway 18/36 is adequate to serve current key destinations such as Sydney and Melbourne and would allow direct services to more distant destinations such as Adelaide, Hobart and Auckland."
- "The existing Runway 18/36 can accommodate A320/B737 services to Sydney and Melbourne and trans Tasman with full passenger loads."

Since these destinations are where passengers want to go to and from, there is no financial nor practical and social acceptability to pander to a small perceived minority regarding other locations.

7. Taxiways

If there is to be increased use of runways during the day, a more suitable taxiway system may be needed, if for no other reason than safety and the efficient use of the Apron etc.

8. Aviation Support Facilities

There is little doubt that airport facilities have to be improved, not only to cater for existing loads but also for increases in flight numbers. The plan submitted may indeed have to be implemented shortly.

9. Master Plan

A plan moving forward is needed but, as previously stated, the opportunity to increase the overall size of the Airport, including runways, is long gone. Whichever way is taken—north/south or east/west, the encroachment on existing dwellings is unacceptable. The increase in noise, pollution, traffic and industrial services, will destroy any quality of life left in the whole area, after taking into account the current development. The Airport is in the wrong place at the wrong time to do anything but make best use of what we have, rather than some developer's view of what we should have to do to increase their earnings.

Any Master Plan must acknowledge that Brisbane Airport – just 1.25 hrs away-- will always be the key Hub for SE Qld and duplication of many of their aviation services is not required, nor necessary.

10. Environmental Impacts.

The noise of aircraft in the area has worsened over the last few years and will undoubtedly continue the trend. The unacceptable noise factor is actually over a much larger area than shown and not all aircraft take the correct flight path, thus widening the true envelope. As Council has not controlled building development in any way, to the north, east or south, it is not

acceptable to consider approving any increase in noise and pollution, which is inherent in larger more frequent aircraft use, either now or in the Plan's vision to 2020.

Detailed and more specific recommendations regarding Flora and Fauna, which would be destroyed due to any site development, cannot be made in the short period allow for general comment, but this issue concerns us greatly. Development Watch and other Associations have a focused opinion on this subject. At an appropriate time, they should be given access to the airport sites (where the Report indicates development could take place) to make a proper assessment.

Conclusion

We strongly urge the Council and Airport management to discard the ideas included in Options 1 to 4. Simple improvements can be made to increase income and add flights which come from most locations in Australia and New Zealand.

It is not possible to consider fully any suggestion made, including upgrade of the Terminal, without well-considered costings. No estimates of cost are included with detail enough to be questioned and yet there seems to be some form of general acceptance in the Press that Council will be pushing for at least Option 1. This really is unacceptable and irresponsible.

It does read as if this Council is keen to push through development approval to increase the price achievable if negotiations are to be started with the corporate sector—particularly companies such as Macquarie Airport Trust. It is time for full transparency as to where Council stands on this issue.

Yours faithfully

Brian Raison
President
Development Watch