

# Sound and fury

*Don Scott Field's proposed expansion meets growing needs*

**B**eing a good neighbor can be a daunting task for an airport, a railroad and similar enterprises that cannot function quietly. This is the challenge the managers of Don Scott Field face as they plan an expansion of Ohio State University's airport.

A proposed lengthening of a runway and related changes in flight paths might appease one set of neighbors, but another set apparently has decided to be angry. Residents of Worthington and Riverlea whose homes might lie under the new flight paths are pushing their communities for noise ordinances or other means to block or alter the plans.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods close to the airport and south of it that, for years, have experienced the brunt of the noise are slated to get some relief, as most jets would use the lengthened north runway,

rather than the south runway they currently use. The reasoning: The north runway has fewer houses in proximity to it than does the south runway.

Airport Director Doug Hammon expressed the dilemma airport officials have faced as they deal with the growth of traffic.

"You don't want to hurt anybody, but you've got to look at how you distribute any bad impacts — how you spread it around," he said.

To his credit, Hammon recently attended a meeting during which he received an earful of complaints from Worthington residents about the plans. Some residents apparently believe their views have not been considered.

Airport managers do have a duty to listen and mitigate noise where safe alternatives exist. Officials say they typically direct pilots to avoid flying

over residential areas and that they do not staff the airport late at night to discourage its use at that time.

The expansion blueprint is on the right track of responding to the needs of fliers, making the airport safer and keeping the noise down when possible.

In the count of takeoffs and landings, Don Scott is the sixth-busiest airport in the state, ahead of Toledo's commercial field.

By state law, OSU's airport cannot take commercial flights; nevertheless, its traffic has boomed, rising 12 percent in just two years. Much of the increase has been spurred by corporate jets, many of which serve businesses and other activities in the vicinity. And some of this increase occurred after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, as a number of executives began avoiding commercial airports.

The OSU field, founded in 1942 to serve the university's aviation program, is self-supporting, relying on income, especially fuel sales, to pay its expenses.

Through the years, Worthington and Riverlea, along with the rest of central Ohio, have benefited from the economic activity generated by the many individuals and businesses using the airport.

Few would be the number of residents anywhere in the neighborhood who could say they purchased property there before any planes began flying overhead. And no one who lives in the burgeoning northwest quadrant of the county could say honestly that they expected Don Scott to remain a sleepy little airstrip.

The width and number of highways and streets in the Columbus area have changed dramatically over the past 60 years. Port Columbus is nothing like its early version. Similarly, Don Scott Field has a duty to meet the needs of an ever-growing population that depends on its services.



Private jets contribute to noise pollution.

## The Columbus Dispatch

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