

The Columbus Dispatch

Runway expansion still up in the air Noise consultant tells Worthington Council more study needed

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A Toledo lawyer, paid \$10,000 by the city of Worthington to study a runway expansion at Ohio State University's airport, told the City Council last night that he needed more information before he could recommend whether to support the proposal.



Dave Zoll said that public records on the impact of the airport are out of date, including a noise-exposure map from 1992 that doesn't include aircraft that are used today.

He recommended that the city urge OSU to try to get the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct a new environmental-impact study, and he asked the council to consider letting him hire an environmental consultant.

The council took no action last night, but Councilwoman Lou Briggs said the city manager is expected to draft a proposed ordinance by the next meeting on paying a consultant no more than an additional \$15,000.

Zoll was hired because of concerns about a possible increase of airplane noise from a longer runway.

Some in the crowd — and a number of council members — accepted his explanation.

Others did not.

Martin Sobel, a pilot who lives in Delaware and supports the proposal, argued that plenty of available information shows that the expansion would reduce noise.

"You don't have to waste any more money on lawyers who don't know the area," he said, drawing a few boos.

OSU wants to expand the north runway at Don Scott Field from 3,000 feet to 6,000 feet, 500 feet shorter than the FAA has recommended for the largest aircraft that use the airport.

Airport officials say that the expansion would make it safer for the larger corporate

jets that have become more common over the years.

The south runway at Don Scott, 5,000 feet long, cannot be extended because of development, said airport director Doug Hammon.

"We try to balance what our customers say they need with what the community wants," Hammon said. "We're not trying to create any animosity."

Residents are mostly concerned that the expansion would shift the primary flight plan to the north, causing lots of jets to fly over Rt. 161 in Worthington.

"The airplanes have gotten louder," said Angelika Gerbes, a Worthington resident who is concerned that property values would drop with a runway expansion.

Resident Ed Lentz said it seems that Don Scott is shifting its focus from training to commerce.

"Sit in our back yards," Lentz said. "Listen to the number of flights that come through — not at the altitudes that you think about, but very low."

But one group that bills itself as an advocate for enhancing central Ohio airports and protecting the lands around them says the proposal could make things quieter for residents.

A larger runway would have room for an instrument guiding system that would let pilots descend gradually, said Alan Harding, president of Columbus Flight Watch. And that would result in less noise, he said.

Still, Zoll said it doesn't appear that the airport expansion is necessary.

"This isn't a situation where they need more runways because people are flying around their facility looking for a place to land," he said.

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