

BLUE GRASS AIRPORT MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Prepared for the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Board

Overview of the Citizens Advisory Committee Process

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed by the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Airport Board (LFUCAB) to gain input from a broad spectrum of informal community leaders as an update to the master plan for Blue Grass Airport is prepared. A CAC membership list is attached. There was a special effort to include representation from airport neighbors. These neighbors, and those with planning experience or background, contributed significantly to the process. The CAC discussions particularly addressed the following:

- runway options and capacity issues integral to the airfield planning phase of the master plan
- development of the airport so that it continues to be compatible with surrounding land uses;
- the viability of transferring general aviation traffic to another facility; and
- consideration of whether an alternative development site may be needed instead of addressing future aviation facility needs at Blue Grass Airport.

The goals and vision for the CAC as identified by the LFUCAB were as follows:

- The CAC was identified as a group of community leaders providing input into long-range planning for board consideration (particularly with respect to meeting future airport capacity needs.)
- Because the long-term health of Blue Grass Airport is essential to the vitality of the community and region, it has been critical to ensure that all viable options have been investigated and that all issues are considered as the Airport Board and the community plan for the future.
- The CAC meetings were intended to allow for candid input from leaders representing diverse community interests, for long-range planning to meet the aviation needs of the Region and to ensure the success of the Airport.

Six meetings of the CAC were conducted between January 2002 and April 2003. The meetings were structured much like a consumer focus group to provide a forum for open and in-depth discussion about the future development of Blue Grass Airport.

In keeping with the goals and vision for the CAC, group discussions often resulted in divergent viewpoints. To ensure that all issues are available for Board consideration, a summary of comments received through the CAC process is presented below, followed by a list of points upon which a consensus was reached by the committee. As subsequent phases of the master plan process proceed, input on future airport development for Board consideration will also be solicited from the community at large through workshops and other traditional public comment mechanisms.

Summary of CAC Comments

- The overall goal of this master plan should be to encourage an efficient and viable airport system for the Lexington area including Blue Grass Airport, Georgetown, and other existing and potential reliever airports.
- Capacity and delay projections in previous planning processes have not been realized. The number of annual aircraft operations has declined, although total passengers have increased. The master plan update, currently underway, projects a limited increase in operations. Much of the projected growth in aircraft operations is driven by general aviation operations. Previous efforts to encourage the growth of general aviation activity at Georgetown Airport have been successful. Some of the CAC members suggested that the enhancement of existing, or the development of additional, general aviation airports should be considered to meet future general aviation demand rather than accommodating this demand at Blue Grass Airport.
- Some members of the CAC noted that previous master plan forecasts have overestimated future activity at LEX. With the current state of the airline industry, this may be true of this planning process as well. These members think there is no justification for a new runway at this time and therefore, no action should be taken to depict a location for an additional runway.
- The master plan analysis determined that additional runway capacity is not needed during the planning period.
- Some members of the CAC noted that preserving a specific runway configuration for the airport at this time could restrict productive development, impact the ability of others to make business decisions, and impact the value of investments made today in the surrounding area based upon changes in future airport plans. Other members of the CAC thought this specific planning was desirable to give as much guidance as possible for business decisions extending out for decades, both for the Airport and its neighbors.
- Most CAC members expressed an interest in identifying plans that would go beyond the traditional 20-year window in order to preserve options for the future, and so that future generations are not faced with the controversy that the Airport Board and community have experienced in other recent planning efforts.
- Some members of the CAC indicated that because the need for additional capacity is projected not to occur within the traditional 20-year planning window, information is too preliminary to predict a need or to accurately identify a specific future runway configuration. These members

noted that the air transportation system could change considerably in 20 years, new air traffic control techniques and new aircraft could come into the system, and airline hubs could be established, relocated or closed, changing service patterns. These members think a runway configuration identified at this time might not be the most optimal when the actual need for runway capacity arises.

- Some members of the CAC expressed the concern that the costs of a new runway when passed through to current users could drive air service away from LEX. This would be harmful to the local economy. Any new runway development should be considered only after a detailed FAA cost/benefit analysis.
- Some CAC members noted that the failure to proactively plan and preserve options for future airport development could preclude meeting future demand, unduly restrict the ability of the airport to serve the community and result in significant public cost when improvements are required. These members expressed concern that further development of the area surrounding the airport would limit future options for necessary airport expansion.
- Some CAC members noted that there is current land use zoning that is in place that provides some protection for the airport from surrounding development, which was confirmed through subsequent meetings with the Division of Planning. However most CAC members believe it remains important for the airport to maintain close coordination and cooperation with the Planning Division.

Consensus Points

- CAC members reached a general consensus that planning for future airport development should occur at the present site rather than at an alternative location. It was felt that alternative locations would be far too expensive and inconvenient to the population served.
- There was also consensus among CAC members that it would be reasonable at this time to consider an alternative that has been identified to reconstruct the crosswind runway (generally aligned with the existing Runway 8-26) with a future length of approximately 5,000 feet to serve general aviation needs and, potentially, small business jets. It was noted that the runway would likely be phased over time with an initial length of 3,500 to 4,000 feet. This would preserve the primary runway for commercial operations and large general aviation use and would provide additional capacity beyond that provided by the current intersecting runways extending the capability of the runway system to address demand beyond the currently identified 2032 horizon. Some members noted that while this is the CAC's preferred alternative, the impacts of this runway development option should be weighed carefully against the impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Finally, there was a consensus that "triggers" (other than the growth of operations, such as changes in zoning or surrounding land use) should be identified for more focused Airport involvement in land use planning, and that there generally should be closer coordination with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Planning.