

From: [Alan Scott](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Airport Renovation
Date: Saturday, October 22, 2022 12:57:13 PM

To the Mayor and City Council:

Please, before you spend taxpayer money on any airport renovation or design for such renovations, consider whether you would spend \$1,000 of your own money to do so.

We entrust you with our tax money to spend wisely and to do so you must consider our history of similar endeavors.

Respectfully,

Alan Scott
Salem

Testimony submitted by Claudia L. Howells

RE: Salem Airport

The City of Salem needs to abandon the pursuit of commercial air service. It has long been a fanciful desire of some in the Salem community and has always failed and always will. And this is why.

Aviation is the second most subsidized transportation mode, with public subsidy far exceeding what is spent on public transit or rail. That is not to suggest that the public subsidy of transportation is a bad thing, but it needs to be done with accountability and transparency, and with full public understanding of who will benefit. The primary question that Council must have answered is whether the millions that it will take to bring a few commercial flights to Salem is justified.

Salem is within the PDX airspace, meaning that flights out of Salem are competing with Portland flights. PDX, as an international airport, will always control the airspace, and will always prioritize larger planes. Eugene is not within the PDX airspace, which has given Eugene the ability to develop commercial air service and a fully functioning airport. Eugene's air service is subsidized. Furthermore, new popup airlines have not done well in Eugene or other small airports. It's a matter of economics.

Airlines make money on the long haul, something that is true for all commercial transportation modes. It is essential for an airline to connect a significant number of passengers to longer flights to be profitable. I enjoyed flying Delta to Salt Lake City during the brief time Delta was flying small planes out of Salem, but even then, I understood that those flights were not sustainable. Flights to Reno, as an example, make no more sense. Like Portland, airports will prioritize bigger planes over regional puddle-jumpers, for good reason.

There may be those who suggest that Salem and Reno are similarly situated. The two cities are not. While similar in population, Reno is far from any other major metropolitan area, 440 miles from Las Vegas. It is served by 12 airlines, but those airlines serve the same cities as airlines flying out of Portland, and with fewer frequencies. Reno functions as a regional hub, which makes sense in Nevada. Salem will never be a regional hub.

We also cannot ignore the environmental and climate impact of jet planes. It is true that a few planes a day will not have significant air quality impact, but that begs the question, doesn't it? How much do we spend for a few flights a day, benefitting a handful of people? Viable, meaning many flights a day, commercial air service out of Salem will do significant damage to our environment and cannot be ignored.

It is noteworthy that France, after a couple of decades of encouraging regional air, is now working hard to eliminate those flights, replacing them with an even more robust passenger rail system, because jets are a significant contributor to climate change. As an aside, flying low-cost airlines in Europe is not a fun experience.

I agree that transportation from Salem to the Portland airport is challenging. The shuttle service is not frequent enough to be convenient, but it is also market driven, so that raises questions about how many people from the Salem-Keizer metro area are flying. Perhaps, it makes more sense to provide subsidies to shuttles and taxis. PDX is also a very good airport, even with the current construction.

I realize that some in the local business community have long pushed for commercial air service out of Salem, and that the city now has federal funds to pursue this, but I suggest you need to approach this with extreme caution and make decisions based on facts and not wishful thinking.

If, indeed, there is genuine potential for commercial service, then the Salem-Keizer area should pursue the creation of an airport authority or inland port district, rather than obligating city tax dollars to a service that would supposedly benefit the entire Mid-Willamette Valley. The city's revenue is already tight and we have far greater needs than making air travel a bit more convenient for a handful of affluent people who may or may not live in Salem.

Thank you for your consideration.

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