

## NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:** **RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** In support of improvements at Tweed-New Haven Airport and throughout the surrounding community to attract additional air service and offer benefits to New Haven residents (Office of the Mayor).

**REPORT:** 1543-15

**ADVICE:** Approval with conditions

### BACKGROUND

Mayor Harp, together with the Tweed-New Haven Airport Authority, is seeking to extend the length of Runway 2-20 (within the existing fence line of the airfield), as part of a broader effort to attract additional commercial air service at Tweed. Legislation is pending at the State Legislature, which if approved, would lift the current 5,600 l.f. limitation on the length of the runway. The letter also expresses an intention to develop and implement projects to improve the livability and safety of the neighborhood. Six (6) projects are identified in the letter, as follows:

- New residential parking along Burr Street to the north of the airport entrance;
- Completion of the \$7 million sound attenuation zone program for 185 nearby homes;
- Community solar to lower energy costs for residents;
- Traffic improvements, including a roundabout at Burr and Dodge Avenues;
- Creating an airport jobs zone to connect residents to work; and
- Linking a shoreline greenway across to Lighthouse Point.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Tweed-New Haven Regional Airport is classified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a primary, commercial service airport with an operating certificate under FAA regulation part 139 (14 C.F.R. Part 139). Part 139 establishes the rules governing the certification and operation of commercial airports. Bradley and Tweed are the only two certified airports in Connecticut with commercial service. The FAA requires a master plan that outlines future plans for upgrading airport facilities for each Part 139 airport. The master plan for Tweed calls for an extension of the main runway in part to facilitate commercial air service.

The State of Connecticut, through Public Act 09-7, limited Runway 2/20 to the existing paved runway length of 5,600 linear feet. The change in state law was an important implementation measure coming out of a 2009 memorandum of agreement with the City of New Haven, the Town of East Haven, the Tweed-New Haven Airport Authority and several state legislators.

American is the only commercial service carrier currently operating at Tweed and the airline recently announced a transition from its turboprop "Dash-8" service to 78-seat regional jets. The jet upgrade offers New Haven passengers a smoother and quieter traveling experience to and from American's hub in Philadelphia. To the business traveler this means a new, improved and more convenient level of service at Tweed with dramatically enhanced passenger service. The new service is welcomed particularly since the Commission is aware that current service is well below the early 1990's when four carriers operated out of Tweed, with service to cities as far away as Chicago.

The overall decline in service is directly related to the runway, because a short runway has a direct bearing on the weight load and passenger capacity that can be safely handled on any given flight to hub cities beyond Philadelphia. This is in part why an astounding 49% of air travelers from Southern Connecticut are using New York City area airports rather than Bradley or Tweed. The City has received considerable input from the business community about the need for more flights to more cities. New airline service and/or expanded service by

American to other hub cities beyond Philadelphia will require further improvements to the airport's infrastructure, including removal of the remaining obstructions, improvements to navigation, adjustments to the taxiway(s), terminal upgrades and an extension to the main runway.

Concerns have been raised, primarily from residents along the East Shore, about the potential adverse impacts associated with additional commercial service. These concerns range from noise, to traffic, to environmental issues. The Mayor's letter seeks to address those concerns through specific mitigation activities in and around the airport. An example is the traffic calming 'roundabout' at the intersection of Dodge Avenue and Burr Street. Another example is the continuation of a highly successful noise mitigation program. Tweed has improved over 50 homes as part of this program with new windows and noise attenuating systems.

Tweed's proposal to expand commercial service beyond Philadelphia is reasonable and appropriate given economic conditions statewide and efforts made to mitigate the impact of commercial air service. The Commission encourages the Board to fully understand the proposed schedule for infrastructure projects and community benefits as well as the potential financial benefits of new commercial service. New service should generate on-airport revenue, an important consideration given Tweed's heavy reliance on state and local subsidies.

**ADVICE**

The Commission recommends that the BoA adopt the Resolution; support efforts to lift the restriction on runway length by deleting in its entirety Section 15-120j (c) of Chapter 267a of the Connecticut General Statutes; and to implement the community benefit projects listed herein with the following conditions:

1. New roundabout subject to review and approval by New Haven Traffic Authority.
2. Shoreline greenway subject to coastal site plan review by City Plan Commission.

**ADOPTED:** April 18, 2018  
Leslie Radcliffe  
Vice Chair

**ATTEST:** MPL.  
Michael Piscitelli, AICP  
Deputy Economic Development Administrator