



April 17, 2023

Senator Kate Lieber, Chair  
Senator Tim Knopp, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee On Rules  
Oregon Legislative Assembly

*Sen.KateLieber@oregonlegislature.gov*  
*Sen.TimKnopp@oregonlegislature.gov*  
*samantha.koopman@oregonlegislature.gov*

**RE: Issues of Concern by Local Governments Over Appointment of State Aviation Board Member Thomas Kenji Sugahara to be Director of the Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV)**

Dear Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to you as the elected leaders of two cities located nearest to the Aurora State Airport that have been negatively affected by a decade's-long controversy between the Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV) and our communities.

For the past 10 years, ODAV's State Aviation Board leadership has demonstrated repeatedly an uncooperative attitude and actively supported illegal actions for planning and operations of the Aurora State Airport that have been reversed by LUBA and the Oregon Courts.

We fail to understand how elevating a member of the State Aviation Board, which has directed the agency to disregard state law and challenge local governments, to becoming the agency director will improve relations between ODAV and the Aurora State Airport communities.

We are even more disappointed to see that the ODAV FY2023-25 State Aviation Board budget request includes \$250,000 of general fund revenues to specifically support litigation by the Department of Justice on behalf of ODAV against local governments and land-use conservation organizations to advance illegal development at the Aurora State Airport.

We, our constituents, area farmers and land-use advocates are alarmed about ODAV's efforts to promote increasingly urbanized levels of activity in unincorporated county territory of high-value EFU farmland without inviting meaningful public input and without supporting public infrastructure — all contrary to Oregon Goals for citizen-involvement and land-use planning. The PSU Oregon Solutions' *Aurora State Airport Assessment Report* commissioned by the legislature in 2018 found a host of agency management troubles, improper influence and poor public engagement and communications problems regarding ODAV's operations and planning at the Aurora State Airport. To date, none of these problems have been remedied.

Sincerely,

Brian Asher, Mayor  
*Mayor@ci.aurora.or.us*

Julie Fitzgerald, Mayor  
*Mayor@ci.wilsonville.or.us*

cc: Senate President Wagner; House Speaker Rayfield; Kelly Brooks, Geoffrey Huntington, Bob Livingston, Vince Porter, Amelia Porterfield, and Karin Power, Governor's Office Staff