

April 15, 2025

Scheduled for public hearing on April 16, 2025, before the Senate Committee On Rules

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

Re: Testimony in Opposition to SR 2 and in support of the proposed -1 amendment, SR 2-1.

Friends of French Prairie has been involved in the fifteen-year-long litigation and legal dispute regarding the Aurora State Airport, and thus has become quite knowledgeable about many of the facts and characteristics of the airport, to same nothing of its limitations.

For context, it is worthy of note that the Draft Master Plan for the Aurora State Airport states "Aurora State Airport is located on a constrained site." Part of the current problem that the Department of Aviation faces is that there are many Modifications of Standards (i.e. variances) that the Federal Aviation Administration considers significant deviations from required safety standards, again because of the efforts to develop this General Aviation airport into something the site itself does not allow.

It should go without saying that the conclusion of a multi-year master planning process for the Aurora State Airport, led by a state agency (Dept. of Aviation) should not result in that state agency being sued in Circuit Court. The master planning process has been characterized by dispute rather than agreement, has resulted in an astronomical price tag to expand the Aurora State Airport, and such lack of consideration of the impact upon adjacent cities that City of Aurora has filed in Marion County Circuit Court to prevent the Department of Aviation from signing the Federal Aviation Administration's approved Airport Layout Plan separate from approval of the Aurora State Airport Master Plan by the State Aviation Board, which approval assures compliance with relevant Oregon law.

Specific to Senate Resolution 2, we are troubled that the sponsor of this resolution has not only chosen to promote some of the positive attributes of this airport at the expense of the limitations that it has, but that the resolution contains false or misleading statements about the airport and its capabilities.

The Resolution centers on the Aurora State Airport's emergency preparedness and response role, however at least three "Whereas" statements are factually incorrect or based on inaccurate assumptions.

[Pg. 1; 19-21] Whereas soil studies at the airport predict a negligible soil settlement following a major seismic event, which indicates that the runway, taxiways and parking aprons will likely remain fully operational with very little needed repair;

The Aurora State Airport and surrounding vicinity are described in geologic maps produced by the Oregon Department of Geological and Mineral Industries [Produced with funding by the State of Oregon and the U.S. Geological Survey]. Clearly shown in these maps and detailed in the report accompanying them is that portions of the Aurora Airport are subject to significant earthquakes and associated significant earthquake-related effects (liquefaction and amplification) that a moderate to severe earthquake would in all likelihood render the runway and much of the airport unusable.

These maps specifically illustrate the following:

The **Relative Earthquake Hazard Map** of the Aurora Airport indicates that the southern half of the existing runway, and all of the proposed runway extension, "based on the combined effects of ground shaking application, liquefaction, and earthquake-induced landslides" are within "Zone B — **Intermediate to high hazard**". (Zone A is Highest hazard and Zone D is Lowest hazard).

The **Relative Amplification Hazard Map** of the Aurora Airport indicates that the southern half of the existing runway, and all of the proposed runway extension, "based on the degree to which shaking from a given earthquake is likely to amplify" are within the "**Medium amplification hazard** (UBC soil type D)". (UBC soil type E has the Highest amplification hazard and UBC soil type C has the Lowest amplification hazard).

The **Relative Liquefaction Hazard Map** of the Aurora Airport indicates that the southern half of the existing runway, and all of the proposed runway extension, "based on the likelihood that liquefaction will occur in a given earthquake" is within the "**Medium liquefaction hazard** zone.

The **Relative Hazard Map Earthquake-Induced Landslides** of the Aurora Airport indicates that the southern half of the existing runway, and all of the proposed runway extension, "based on the possibility that a given earthquake will trigger landslides", are within the "**Low landslide hazard**" zone; the northern half of the Aurora Airport is outside of the Relative Earthquake-Induced Hazard zone.

Maps Download: <http://www.oregongeology.org/pubs/ims/p-ims.htm>

[Pg. 2; 12-13] Whereas the airport is surrounded by agricultural lands that during an emergency can be repurposed as staging areas for use in emergency management operations;

The Aurora State Airport is for the most part surrounded by agricultural lands. However, there are very important details to consider that would significantly limit the ability of those lands to be repurposed as staging areas for use in emergency management operations.

- The land directly west of the airport (across Hwy 551) is the residential neighborhood of Deer Creek Estates, and the EFU ag land north of this neighborhood is occupied by two agricultural businesses: Anderson Hay and Grain and Smith Gardens, and the properties are fully occupied.
- The north end of the airport is bounded by Arndt Road, and the ag land directly north of Arndt Road is bounded by high voltage power lines, creating an operational hazard.
- The ag land to the south of the airport (directly south of Kiel Road) is six to eight feet lower in elevation than the airport runway, and is a large hazelnut orchard.
- The ag land to the east of the airport is EFU ag land in cultivation for fresh vegetable crops.

It is only the ag land east of the airport that could easily and rapidly be repurposed as a staging area. Further, this ag land is separated from the Aurora Airport by Airport Road, one of the two major roads into the City of Aurora, and which would clearly pose traffic conflicts, etc.

{Pg. 2; 14-15} Whereas the airport was constructed as a military airport and its runway was designed to be capable of landing heavy military-type aircraft;

The Aurora Airport was originally constructed as a military airport during WWII, but it was not a principal US Army Air Corps airport. It was known as the Aurora Flight Strip, was an outlying (supporting) airfield to Portland Army Air Base for military aircraft training flights. The size of aircraft able to operate at airports is a function of the airfield design, most specifically runway width, length and strength. The runway at the Aurora State Airport is 5,004 feet long, 100 feet wide and has a strength rating of 45,000 pounds. Specific to the statement “capable of landing heavy military-type aircraft, see the following manufacturer specifications for the major fixed wing and rotary wing military transport aircraft:

Lockheed C-5 Galaxy military transport aircraft - Maximum Cargo: 281,001 pounds; Maximum Takeoff Weight: 840,000 pounds; Empty weight: 374,000 pounds; Wingspan: 223 feet.

Lockheed C-130 Hercules - Maximum Normal Payload: C-130E, 36,500 pounds; Maximum Takeoff Weight: C-130E/H: 155,000 pounds; Empty Weight: 74,345 pounds; Wingspan: 132 feet.

Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight – Maximum Normal Payload: 7,000 pounds; Maximum Takeoff Weight: 24,300; Empty Weight: 12-13,000 pounds

Boeing CH-47 Chinook - Maximum Normal Payload: 24-26,000 pounds; Maximum Takeoff Weight: 50,000; Empty Weight: 24,578 pounds

Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion – Maximum Normal Payload: 30,000; Maximum Takeoff Weight: 69,750; Empty Weight: 33,226 pounds

Thus it is clear that even in normal operating conditions military fixed wing aircraft are too large to use the Aurora State Airport, and it is limited to transport helicopters. This would be even

more the case following a major earthquake event that severely damages much of the runway and taxiway.

We urge the Committee to take the necessary corrective actions to address these problems by adopting the -2 amendment to correct the record.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benjamin D. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature, there is a faint, light blue rectangular stamp or watermark.

Ben Williams, President

SCR 2-1
(LC 3757)
2/3/25 (DJ/cfc/ps)

Requested by Senator WOODS

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2**

1 On page 1 of the printed concurrent resolution, delete lines 2 through 30.

2 On page 2, delete lines 1 through 23 and insert:

3 “Whereas Aurora State Airport, which is owned and operated by the
4 Oregon Department of Aviation in a rural area outside the City of Aurora,
5 maintains an airport emergency plan (AEP), a set of procedures for coordi-
6 nating responses to emergencies at the airport and in the surrounding com-
7 munity; and

8 “Whereas the AEP includes sections on communications, command and
9 control, alert notification and warning, emergency public information, pro-
10 tective actions, law enforcement and security, firefighting, search and rescue
11 and medical care; and

12 “Whereas based near Aurora State Airport are two of the nation’s largest
13 heavy-lift helicopter companies (Columbia Helicopters, Inc., and Helicopter
14 Transport Services), including not only each company’s fleet of helicopters
15 but also support services such as logistics, dispatch and maintenance; and

16 “Whereas Life Flight Network, the principal emergency air medical ser-
17 vice for the northwestern United States, has its regional headquarters in
18 Wilsonville and flight operations near Aurora State Airport; and

19 “Whereas the services of these three companies will be critical to the
20 people of the region following a disaster; and

21 “Whereas Aurora State Airport lacks any Transportation Security Ad-

1 ministration (TSA) facilities or other secured areas suitable for staging
2 emergency supplies, and there is also a lack of sufficient public water and
3 sewer facilities to support a sudden increase in activity during an emergency;
4 and

5 “Whereas geologic maps produced by the State Department of Geology
6 and Mineral Industries clearly show that the southern portion of Aurora
7 State Airport is subject to significant earthquake-related effects (liquefaction
8 and amplification), and that a moderate or severe earthquake would likely
9 render the runway and much of the airport unusable; and

10 “Whereas the Oregon Court of Appeals found that the purported 2012
11 Aurora State Airport Master Plan was never lawfully approved and adopted
12 by the State Aviation Board and that the airfield has ARC B-II status, with
13 a design capacity suitable for general aviation aircraft but too small for
14 corporate and commercial passenger or freight jets; and

15 “Whereas the Oregon Department of Aviation’s preferred alternative de-
16 sign in the pending master plan would expand the airfield at Aurora State
17 Airport to ARC C-II design standards, which would accommodate corporate
18 jets but not commercial passenger or freight jets; and

19 “Whereas an expansion of the airfield to ARC C-II status would require
20 moving State Highway 551 (OR-551), the acquisition of private properties,
21 including displacement of low-income housing and farms via condemnation,
22 and expansion of the airport onto exclusive farm use land, with a total es-
23 timated cost of \$184 million; and

24 “Whereas the state Department of Transportation has much more impor-
25 tant projects than moving OR-551 to accommodate a small number of private
26 jets at Aurora State Airport, which can easily instead use the existing run-
27 way and other facilities at the Salem-Willamette Valley Airport; and

28 “Whereas Aurora State Airport is one of only two state airports approved
29 for through-the-fence operations, which allow private aircraft based on pri-
30 vate property to operate as if they are based at the state airport, a re-

1 lationship that creates a natural conflict of interest between private owners
2 and developers next to an airport and the public interest in terms of general
3 aviation operations and emergency management; and

4 “Whereas Aurora State Airport is located within 25 miles of Salem-
5 Willamette Valley Airport, a much larger airport which already has an ARC
6 C-II airfield capable of supporting commercial passenger and freight jets, as
7 well as heavy military transport aircraft such as the C-5 Galaxy and C-130
8 Hercules; and

9 “Whereas Salem-Willamette Valley Airport also has TSA facilities and
10 large secured areas suitable for staging emergency supplies, but it has been
11 given only cursory analysis as an alternative to expanding Aurora State
12 Airport by the Oregon Department of Aviation and its master plan consult-
13 ants, which clearly prefer to support private developers at Aurora State
14 Airport; now, therefore,”

15 Delete lines 25 through 28 and insert:

16 “That we, the members of the Eighty-third Legislative Assembly, recog-
17 nize that Aurora State Airport, and its nearby through-the-fence private
18 properties, should remain primarily a helicopter and drone airport to avoid
19 the extraordinary expense of expansion of the airfield to ARC C-II status,
20 which would still be inadequate for use by passenger or freight jets during
21 an emergency; and be it further

22 “Resolved, That we recognize that it would be significantly less expensive
23 and more in the public interest for the State of Oregon to acquire the private
24 properties near Aurora State Airport at a reasonable market price and con-
25 vert the airport into an emergency management hub that also supports gen-
26 eral aviation and refocuses the mission of the airport away from corporate
27 jets, thus resolving the longstanding conflict between the airport and the
28 immediately adjacent communities over the aspirations of the airport devel-
29 opers and better preparing for future emergency management needs while
30 also better aligning airport operations with the general public interest; and

1 be it further

2 “Resolved, That we strongly recommend that the Oregon Department of
3 Aviation and the State Aviation Board not adopt any plan for expansion of
4 Aurora State Airport until the airport and nearby through-the-fence proper-
5 ties have been annexed by the City of Aurora and connected to city water
6 and sewer services.”.

7
