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## Report of the GACC Transportation Committee on Craig Airport

In the past 20 years, there have been numerous attempts by the Jacksonville Port Authority to extend runway 14/32 at Craig Airport to allow corporate jets to use the airport as a base of operations. The premise was that many corporations will not base their aircraft in Jacksonville, because Craig airport, although very convenient as far as location is concerned, cannot accommodate corporate jet aircraft due to runways of only 4000 ft. in length.

All previous attempts to extend runways at Craig Airport have been soundly defeated. Strong opposition came from civic organizations, residents surrounding Craig, Audubon Society, environmental groups, City Council members, and others. The reasons for opposition are numerous, and valid, and can be recognized by looking back to the history of all municipal airports in Jacksonville.

In 1968, the City of Jacksonville closed Imeson Airport — which was determined to be obsolete — and moved to the new Jacksonville International Airport (JIA) located five miles northwest of Imeson Airport. The city purchased 8000 acres of land to build a true international airport to safely handle all types of aircraft, including jet fighters of the Air National Guard. The completed JIA now has a 10,000 ft main instrument runway (7-25) and an 8000 ft crosswind runway (13-31). Also, land is available to build a parallel 8000 ft. runway (7-25) with capacity to conduct dual IFR simultaneous approaches should future growth dictate. At present, JIA is considered an under-utilized airport.

By purchasing 8000 acres of land for JIA, the city of Jacksonville has, thankfully, solved serious encroachment problems that other large cities are finding themselves involved in when dealing with non-compatible land use around their major airports - especially with attempting to expand runways, taxiways and/or air operations.

JIA possesses all the amenities that any corporate, air carrier, military or private pilot would desire for a safe operation. Some of these are:

1. Category II and III instrument landing minimums.
2. Straight-in instrument approaches to ALL runways.
3. Strobe approach lights on the main instrument runway.
4. High Intensity Runway Lights (HIRL) on all runways.
5. Runway Visual Range (RVR) electronically measuring visibility at the touchdown point of the runway.
6. Rotating Beam Ceildmeter (RBC) measuring the base of clouds at the approach end of the runway in use.

7. JIA is surrounded by a designated Class "C" airspace (a 10 mile circle from center of airport) in which all aircraft arriving, departing, or over-flying this airspace, whether IFR or VFR, receive radar vectoring, separation and sequencing to insure a safe operation.
8. JIA has jet arrival and departure climb corridors which reduce the time the jet aircraft spend at low altitudes where a chance of a mid-air collision is greatest.

**None of the safety aids mentioned above exist at Craig Airport**, nor will they be in the future.

Does it make sense to remove corporate jets from such a safe environment as JIA and place them at Craig, a small general aviation airport, which handles predominately private and student pilot activities using slow moving propellor driven aircraft?

Craig Airport is an obsolete World War II airport where, over the years, incompatible land use has surrounded the airport. This includes thousands of new, high value residential homes whose homeowners have been promised that Craig Airport will never be expanded because of the many unsolvable constraints, such as:

1. A cluster of five 1000 ft. Tall television antennas located 3 ½ miles southwest of Craig Airport runway 4/22.
2. Dames Point Bridge towers 3 miles northwest of Craig runway 14/32.
3. Overlapping traffic areas with Mayport NAS, which could conflict with US Navy traffic, if high performance corporate jets are allowed to use Craig Airport.

All of the above raise the minimum instrument approach altitude to Craig Airport, which is an undesirable feature. Such obstructions to air navigation do not exist at JIA.

One serious problem caused by the obstructions around Craig necessitated the Instrument Landing System (ILS) at Craig to be installed on the worst possible runway - landing to the northwest on runway 32. Bad weather and wind almost always comes from the northeast, or east from over the Atlantic Ocean. Using the ILS at Craig means that when the ceiling and visibility are at minimums, a strong northeast crosswind or tailwind will preclude the aircraft from landing straight-in to runway 32, and a circling approach to land on runway 4 (into the wind) will have to be made.

What is potentially dangerous in this procedure, is that a jet aircraft making this approach to runway 4 is usually flying at 400-500 ft. Altitude to remain clear of clouds. It will necessarily be turning toward the cluster of five 1000 ft. Tall antennas, with guy wires, located 3.5 miles southwest of runway 4 in its attempt to land at runway 4. A collision with these antennas is a real possibility, since jet aircraft make wider patterns than propeller driven aircraft.

The Jacksonville Port Authority argues that JIA is inconveniently located for most corporations to base their aircraft, since most business and corporate families live in the

southeast quadrant of Jacksonville. Our response to this hypothesis is that JIA is only 15 minutes by car from Craig Airport when using the Dames Point Bridge. Does it make sense to spend millions of taxpayers dollars to expand an obsolete airport to save some corporation 15 minutes of driving time? Our recommendation is that JIA should be the master corporate airport, and Craig Airport be left alone to continue to function as a general aviation airport. Also to be considered is when NAS Cecil Field is officially closed, that airfield, with its 12,000 ft. And 10,000 ft. Runways, could be used as a future corporate airport with little or no cost to the taxpayers of Jacksonville.

The impact of extending a runway at Craig will be extremely detrimental to all neighborhoods in the Arlington area. A longer runway will inevitably generate larger aircraft, with their correspondingly wider patterns and more powerful engines. Since Arlington is basically a residential community with little or no industry, the effects of increased noise from low flying aircraft will drastically reduce property values for many thousands of existing high value homes. Noise complaints from residents will reach unmanageable levels, and solutions will be almost non-existent. This scenario must never be allowed to happen.

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An issue that has been unexamined up till now is the financial viability of Craig Airport. Examining the Port Authority financial reports covering Craig Airport, it states that Craig Airport had a cash flow for 1998 that was positive in the amount of \$31,030. This figure is not a true profit, as it includes no depreciation expense, nor any costs for payments in lieu of taxes. As of this writing (8/31/99) the committee has been unable to determine the true amount of these costs. It would seem reasonable to assume they would have to exceed **one million dollars**. In fact, Craig Airport is operating at a cost to the taxpayers of Duval County that far exceeds any hope for improvement in income.

It would seem reasonable, when one recognizes the value of the land Craig occupies and the amount of taxes not generated, that a far more intelligent business decision would be to build a new airport in a part of the county protected by zoning from residential or business encroachment. Such a facility could be constructed with the funds that could be generated by the sale of the existing Craig Airport to taxpaying buyers.

The committee strongly supports the concept of a viable reliever airport. However, the members equally believe that the most intelligent course of action is to utilize Cecil Field Airport, or the construction of a new, optimally located airport for that purpose. In either case, after the newly designated reliever airport is functional, Craig Airport should be closed, and the land put on the tax roles once again.

By the Committee: Leonard Stevens, Chairman  
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