

# The True Meaning of Safety at Craig Airport

Times-Union Editorial Comment

Written By

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In response to a recent T-U editorial presented by a local corporate owner/pilot that actively uses Craig airport, I would like to state an opposing view of the proposed Craig Airport runway system expansion. The word "SAFETY" is being used as a ruse or red herring by the Jacksonville Aviation Authority (JAA), their LPA Group consultants, and other corporate aircraft owners currently using Craig Airport. These people want to make the public think that the addition of a 2,000 foot runway extension, from 4,000 feet to 6,000 feet, will make the communities surrounding the airport safer.

Several years ago, the JAA tried to expand Craig Airport's 14/32 runway. This expansion was overwhelmingly defeated by the surrounding community citizens and by the majority of the City Council members when it was brought before them. Jacksonville's Comprehensive Plan states that the Craig Airport runways will NOT be lengthened. So why is the JAA again pushing their agenda on this issue ?

Craig Airport had a Citizen's Advisory Meeting on August 21<sup>st</sup>. Persons attending were surrounding community home owners, JAA's Izzy Bonilla, Director of Aviation Management and staff, their consultants, and the Federal Aviation Administration Control Tower manager. During their presentation, the JAA consultants stated that larger corporate aircraft are beginning to land and take off from Craig. These corporate aircraft only meet bare minimum landing and takeoff distances and minimum weight limitations. In many cases, these larger aircraft depart Craig with a minimum takeoff load of fuel and passenger weight just to depart the runway. They then proceed to another airport to add more fuel before continuing to their final destinations. Does this sound like it's safe for the surrounding community ? Why is this practice even being permitted by JAA or FAA ? It's not their call. It lies in the hands of the corporate pilots. They know the limitations of their aircraft and of the airports they use. They also have the ultimate decision of safety for themselves, their aircraft, and their passengers. Why don't these pilots choose to use Jacksonville's International Airport (JIA) where the runway lengths are not a concern. These corporate people want to use Craig because they would prefer not to have to spend 30 extra minutes driving to JIA. Where is the safety ?

If the Craig 14/32 runway is extended 2,000 feet to the south as proposed, the Instrument Landing System (ILS), used to assist pilots in landing, will also have to be moved 2,000 feet further south. By extending the ILS, it will mean that ALL landing aircraft using the ILS, especially in inclement weather conditions, will be descending lower near the corner of Atlantic and Kernan Blvd. than they currently

of these residents still remember the doctor and his family who perished in a holiday crash in inclement weather behind the BJ's Discount Warehouse Store a few years ago. Where is the safety ?

As a 20 + year resident living near the airport and also as a 30 + year licensed pilot flying in and out of Craig, I can count on my fingers, the number of aviation accidents over the past 30+ years, most happening on takeoff. If the airport is so unsafe, why has it not been closed as a dangerous hazard to the surrounding community ? Lengthening the runway does not help an aircraft that loses an engine at 300 feet after takeoff. Where is the safety ?

Noise abatement continues to be a major concern for the surrounding airport communities. Larger jet aircraft means louder engines. Jets or any other aircraft for that matter, take off under maximum power, only reducing power at assigned Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) altitudes by air traffic controllers. The increased noise of these engines, especially taking off at 5:00 to 6:00 AM, is a nuisance to the community. An airport curfew should be considered such as the one in San Jose, CA, where NO aircraft, private or commercial, are permitted to takeoff or land before or after specific hours, with hefty fines for violators. No takeoffs before 7:00 AM or landings after 10:00 PM should be strongly considered for Craig.

Why should the residents of the surrounding Craig Airport communities have to continue fighting the same battle with the JAA over and over again to stop an unwanted airport runway expansion ? Why is JAA spending time, energy, and our tax dollars to have consultants develop expansion plans that the surrounding airport communities do not want ? Where is the safety ?

cc: City Council Members

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