

**Committee for Preserving Community Quality
5221 Crooked Stick Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
734-944-9452**

14 September 2011

Matthew J. Kulhanek
Airport Manager
Municipal Airport – Public Services Area
301 East Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8867

Dear Mr. Kulhanek:

The Committee for Preserving Community Quality is pleased to provide the city and its Airport Advisory Committee (AAC) details in support of our objections to the proposed expansion of Runway 6-24 at the Ann Arbor Municipal Airport in response to your request of August 19, and offer other details related to the Lohr / Textile Greenway (LTG) project, as well. Thank you for this opportunity.

Specifically, you requested details of our objection to the proposed runway expansion that would add 71,250 square feet to the existing runway (950 feet x 75 feet) as related to the Three Fires Aquifer. In our view, this added impervious surface could pose serious risks to the aquifer, which is a source of drinking water for the city of Ann Arbor. These risks come in the form of reduced evaporation, or reduced recharge of the aquifer from the large amount of pavement that would replace what is now open, natural land. That impervious surface and the impact of the aviation traffic it would bear (General Aviation aircraft carrying leaded fuels, oil, tires, metals, and deicing fluids from added jet traffic – even though you may not deice on your airport, there is a residual from deicing fluid added in hangars and other airports) would all contribute to the loss of evaporation. Further, impervious surfaces tend to concentrate runoff at the edges, and the larger the surface, the greater the likely concentration of runoff. As such, the city and the airport should have conducted a detailed study of the impact of this action. Absent such a report, in our April 2010 response to the Draft Environmental Assessment, this was one reason we called for an Environmental Impact Study, which should include this type of detailed research, because the impact of such a risk to the aquifer could be significant.

As to your corresponding request regarding the LTG project, we have evaluated both the LTG and proposed airport expansion projects with the assistance of our consultants from the University of California, Santa Cruz, to inform our decisions. And, while it may seem to laymen that on the surface both projects are similar because they involve significant amounts of square footage, as referred to in your August 19 letter, they are actually quite different. The LTG project, for instance, incorporates storm-water mitigation for its impervious surfaces, and also

includes plants and trees to capture rainwater, along with drainage at the path's edges. The proposed expanded runway does not plan such plants and trees for reasons of obvious practicality, or any mitigation. Moreover, and most critically, evaporation is not lost from newly paved surfaces at a linear rate, but, rather, both geometrically and exponentially. Consequently, a 75-foot-wide surface paved to runway thickness without mitigation has the potential to degrade the aquifer at a significantly greater level than does a 10-foot-wide non-motorized path designed for bicycles with mitigation. Furthermore, the non-motorized path, would not be tolerating any of the polluting traffic mentioned previously that the new and expanded airport runway would invite, worsening evaporation losses. Given these dramatic technical differences, we have seen no reasons to object to the LTG project. In fact, we support the project and its open, natural approach – something Ann Arbor, itself, has been backing both in policy and public action for years.

We appreciate the AAC's willingness to seek external input to your decision-making process. Now that you are aware of these factors and significant differences, we urge your Committee to grant Pittsfield Township's request for an LTG easement, which benefits not only Pittsfield and Ann Arbor, but the entire Washtenaw County community, since the LTG will ultimately join the Ann Arbor bicycle path and enhance the entire region and benefit its citizens.

In conclusion, given the environmental risks detailed above that the proposed runway expansion could pose to the aquifer and your city's drinking water supply, we urge your Committee to at least postpone any action on a proposed runway expansion, if not reconsider that decision entirely, until a proper study of the impact of the added impervious surface can be conducted. To do otherwise, would be to operate at great risk with minimal expert information, while holding hostage a very different, publicly oriented, community-wide project, that all empirical evidence shows poses no such threat.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of our Committee.

Cordially,

Andrew R. McGill, Ph.D.
Chairman

Cc: Airport Advisory Committee
Craig Lyon, Pittsfield Township Director of Utilities & Municipal Services
Damien Wetzal, PE, Pittsfield Township Engineer
Sue McCormick, City of Ann Arbor, Public Services Area Administrator
Pittsfield Township Board of Trustees
Stonebridge Board of Directors