

PKD MASTER PLAN: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SIDETRACKED

BACKGROUND. Master Plans are important documents that guide, direct, and set limits on project development. **The DeKalb Peachtree Airport (PKD) Master Plan process that is currently underway will guide and set limits on PKD Airport development for the next several decades.** In August 2004, the DeKalb Board of Commissioners authorized the development of a new PKD Master Plan, utilizing professional consultants and promising extensive public involvement throughout the entire process.

Six months and \$80,000 into the project, the consultants had produced two strong reports by April 2005 -- the first on Public Involvement in the process and the second a 6-page PKD Vision & Policy Document. This second report identified seven key vision and policy themes: (1) safe and efficient operations, (2) environmental sensitivity, (3) community relations, (4) financial self-sufficiency, (5) general aviation, (6) customer friendliness and (7) effective institutional framework. Full details are available at www.pdkwatch.org. The consultants intended their vision and policy document, along with the public involvement plan, to be used "as a means to provide structure to the master plan development process" after its review and adoption by the PKD Airport Advisory Board (AAB) and the DeKalb Board of Commissioners.

RECENT ACTION. At the three AAB meetings in April, May, and June 2005, the consultants' policy report and all-but-one of the nine proposals from the public were blocked from even being discussed. Instead, Richard Ossoff, chair of the AAB, put forward his own one-page set of loosely-drawn policy proposals that appear to leave the airport largely free to develop as it chooses in the future. These policy proposals, with minor modifications, were approved by the AAB in June 2005, and are being recommended to the Commissioners for adoption.

CONCERNS

- It would be hard to disagree with the general sentiments expressed in the AAB policies but the policies fail to provide clear and explicit limitations on PKD expansion. Missing are (1) an explicit reaffirmation that PKD will remain a general aviation airport and undertake no engineering measures that could allow it to become a Class III airport, capable of accommodating much larger jets and (2) the 1992 Master Plan prohibition on airport physical expansion beyond its current boundaries (except under certain specific circumstances). Why were the excellent recommendations from the professional consultants set aside? Why is the AAB unwilling even to DISCUSS more than the limited range of policy proposals put forward by one of its own members?
- At a BOC work session, August 2, airport director Remmel and AAB chair Ossoff are scheduled to present the AAB recommendations. There is no provision for public comment at work sessions; no public comments, questions or rebuttals. How will the commissioners get a full perspective on the issues?

WHAT CAN A CITIZEN DO?

1. **Get more detailed information** about the PKD Master Plan process and how its public participation component appears to have been derailed by the recent actions of the PKD Airport Advisory Board at www.pdkwatch.org in the Master Plan section.
2. **Contact your County Commissioners** about your concerns and encourage them to consider seriously the recommendations of their own Master Plan consultants and the public before adopting policy guidelines for the PKD Master Plan. **In particular, ask the Commissioners to approve a clear policy preventing PKD Airport from changing from its present Class II "general aviation" status into a Class III airport that would allow larger and more disruptive jets.**

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--Larry Foster