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Posted by Dyna Bagby on September 15, 2017.

### PDK Airport's proposed hangars raise noise concerns

A proposal to build more hangars at DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK) has residents in Brookhaven and Chamblee raising concerns about even more noise from the second-busiest airport in the state.

The airport, which is governed by DeKalb County and located in the city of Chamblee, is near the Brookhaven border. Residents living in nearby neighborhoods, such as Ashford Park, have in the past complained about noise from the airport.



An illustration of proposed hangars at the south end of the PDK Airport runway.  
(Special)

A federally mandated emergency area for runaway aircraft is currently being constructed and the land being cleared for this project is being eyed by airport administrators as the perfect place for new hangars.

PDK Airport Director Mario Evans said the airport is currently constructing a \$10 million Engineered Material Arresting System, or EMAS, at the south end of the runway after being directed to do so by the Federal Aviation Administration.

That project began July 5 and includes the clear cutting of more than 10 acres of trees near the south end of the runway — close to the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant — that have been a buffer for homes living along and near Clairmont Road.

The project is funded with 90 percent FAA funds, 5 percent state funds and 5 percent airport funds.

Evans said nearly 7 acres of trees will remain as a buffer between the airport

and Clairmont Road.

The EMAS is essentially a bed of powdery materials, such as sand, where a runaway aircraft can drive into and safely stop so it does not go off the runway, Evans said. An airport EMAS can be compared to runaway truck ramps seen on the side of interstates that gives trucks with braking problems a place to drive to a stop, Evans said.

"It stops the aircraft from moving and saves the aircraft," he said. And it keeps any runaway aircraft from driving onto the busy Dresden Drive.

The trees near the runway are being cut down specifically so the airport can dig up the dirt to use in the EMAS bed, Evans said, and saving the airport about \$1 million from having to ship in dirt.

At the site of where some of the trees are being removed are proposed plans to build nine private/corporate hangars, Evans said. That proposal has raised the ire of some neighbors living in the area who are just recently hearing about the plans and are disturbed about the trees cut down and the potential for more noise.

For some the concern is about the lack of communication between the airport and the residents living in the Chamblee and Brookhaven neighborhoods letting them know what is happening.

"The major concerns vary depending on who you ask," said Jordan Fox, who lives in the Wakefield Forest neighborhood in Chamblee and said he is one of the few residents who regularly attend the PDK Airport Advisory Board meetings.

"For me it is all about communication," Fox said. "I feel that the Chamblee representative on the PDK airport advisory board, Dan Zanger, does not communicate what's going on at PDK to Chamblee. PDK also does a poor job communicating to Chamblee, Brookhaven and citizens in general. If you don't go to meetings you have no idea what's going on. I wish DeKalb would help them be better communicators."

Others are concerned about the development itself, specifically the removal of trees and the noise that will come from the additional hangars, Fox said.



PDK Airport has clear-cut several acres of trees at the south end of the runway that some residents said served as a buffer to noise to those living near the airport.  
(Dyana Bagby)

"Oddly, the noise currently affects those who live north or south of the airport like my neighborhood, The Variations Condos, Drew Valley in Brookhaven. We hear the noise. With the east/west runway closed, Ashford Park and the rest of Brookhaven doesn't hear nearly as much noise unless it's a helicopter," Fox said. "With the new proposed development, they are worried they will hear a lot more noise, though I don't think they will, but there's no way to know for sure."

Brookhaven Councilmember John Park, who lives in Ashford Park near the airport, said it's common knowledge the airport has always wanted to expand. About 20 years ago, the airport purchased several acres of residential property on Clairmont Road using FAA funds.

DeKalb County Commissioners Jeff Rader and Kathie Gannon supported a decision by residents to turn that area into green space, but when the city of Chamblee annexed the airport five years ago, it rezoned the property for airport industrial use, Park explained. Adding hangars is the logical next step, he said.

"There is the zoning for it, there is a demand for it, and Mario wants it," he said. "PDK is a resource for the entire community. I chose to live next to an airport. And it's not like they are adding another runway." Park said there are plans to bring Evans to a Brookhaven work session or City Council meeting in the near future to discuss the proposed development.

Evans said PDK has 21 corporate hangars and 153 other hangars that are full all the time. Most airplane owners want hangars because they do not want their aircraft sitting outside in the elements, for example, he said.

The new hangars have the potential to bring in million in property taxes from that would benefit Chamblee, DeKalb County and the DeKalb County Board of Education, Evans said. New hangars help with economic development and attracting corporations to the area, Evans said. Estimates include more than \$2 million a year to DeKalb, more than \$1 million a year to Chamblee and nearly \$4 million for DeKalb Schools.

Evans said there are plans to replace the trees cut down on airport grounds or elsewhere in DeKalb County. PDK is self-sufficient and receives no county funds, Evans said.

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