



March 17, 2021

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Sen.LeeBeyer@oregonlegislature.gov
Rep.SusanMcLain@oregonlegislature.gov
patrick.h.brennan@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: Request for Public Hearing on HB 2497 – Proposed Legislation to Create Transparent Public Process for State Aviation Department Agency Communications and Coordination with Local Governments and Communities on Aurora State Airport Master Planning Issues of Concern

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to you as the elected leaders of two cities each located near the Aurora State Airport to request your support this legislative session in resolving a decade-long controversy between the Oregon Department of Aviation (ODA) and our communities regarding the agency's uncooperative attitude with respect to the Aurora State Airport Master Plan and management of the airport.

At the request of the Aurora and Wilsonville City Councils, Representative Courtney Neron (HD-26) has introduced HB 2497 as a “process bill” that does not dictate predetermined results for the airport. Rather, the proposed legislation creates an open transparent, public process to establish formal channels of intergovernmental communication and planning coordination between the state Aviation agency and directly impacted local governments, which has been sorely lacking over the past 10 years.

HB 2497 also provides for updating the controversial *2012 Aurora State Airport Master Plan* that has been the subject of significant community concern and litigation, conducting a much-needed environmental assessment of current airport pollution levels, and planning for eventual annexation of the airport by the City of Aurora to provide municipal governance and urban services.

We believe that ODA circumvented Oregon public-process laws regarding the purported adoption of the *2012 Aurora State Airport Master Plan*. Ever since we began disputing in 2010 what we view as an illegitimate process, the state agency has been virtually unresponsive to our local communities. We are alarmed by the agency's airport-expansion efforts that promote increasingly urbanized levels of activity in unincorporated county territory of high-value EFU farmland without engaging meaningful public input and without supporting public infrastructure — all contrary to Oregon Goals for citizen-involvement and land-use planning. The PSU Oregon Solutions' *Aurora State Airport Assessment Report* commissioned by the legislature in 2018 found a host of agency management troubles, improper influence and poor public engagement and communications problems with ODA's operations and planning at the Aurora State Airport.

We respectfully request that the Joint Committee on Transportation provide a public-hearing opportunity for HB 2497 as a way to prepare a roadmap forward for resolving the 10-year-long Aurora State Airport conflict between the state agency and local communities. To date, *the only local open public forum* on ODA's efforts to expand the Aurora State Airport was held by the Wilsonville City Council in November 2018 that drew 200 attendees.

Sincerely,

Brian Asher, Mayor
Mayor@ci.aurora.or.us

Julie Fitzgerald, Mayor
Mayor@ci.wilsonville.or.us

cc: Senate President Peter Courtney; House Speaker Tina Kotek; Gina Zejdlik, Governor's Chief of Staff