



Officials craft 20-year plan for airport improvements

Elias C. Arnold

The Arizona Republic

Jun. 6, 2007 02:53 PM

Phoenix anticipates air traffic at Phoenix Goodyear Airport will more than double over the next 20 years, growth Goodyear officials hope will stimulate Scottsdale Airpark-like development.

Phoenix aviation officials have crafted a 20-year master plan that calls for improvements to handle nearly 387,000 take-offs and landings a year, known as movements. The airport had 159,000 movements in 2006.

Goodyear endorsed the airport plan last week. Phoenix City Council approval was anticipated this week.

If an accompanying commercial office center takes root around the airport, such an employment hub could eventually change the largely bedroom community character of the Southwest Valley.

Nearly 4,000 acres of land around the airport are targeted for development. The area is more than half again the size of the 42,000-employee Scottsdale Airpark, according to Scottsdale's web site.

"We know it will happen. It's not if, it's when," said Brian Dalke, a Goodyear deputy city manager.

The hope is economic development will get a boost from better airport facilities that ease business executives' access.

"If the facilities aren't there, folks aren't going to show up on the (Goodyear) doorstep. They're going to go where the facilities are," said Carl Newman, an assistant aviation director with Phoenix.

Planned improvements include a secondary runway for single and multi-engine piston aircraft, high-speed taxiway exits from the primary runway and nearly triple its roughly 200 airplane hangars.

The airport's master plan was last updated in 1986. Under the new plan it would continue to serve private planes and no commercial flights.

Land around the airport is largely empty, but landowners have expressed interest in developing the property.

Not everyone likes the idea of the area becoming a large-scale commercial center.

"The growth is getting to be too much," said Mary Cardinali, who lives near the airport in a neighborhood southwest of Estrella Parkway and Yuma Road.

Cardinali, a 55-year-old nurse, said she expects the development will increase traffic and noise, but doubts air traffic would bother her.

Dalke said the airport's proximity to Interstate 10, Loop 303 and Arizona 801, a planned east-west reliever for I-10, should mitigate traffic issues.

Light rail could also be a factor, he added.

"We've looked long and hard as far as how we can position this for transportation," Dallke said.

Dalke said infrastructure improvements to the largely empty land surrounding the airport could begin within 18 months.

The Federal Aviation Administration estimates the airport will see more modest growth to 191,000 annual movements over 20 years, up from 159,000 in 2006.

Barney Helmick, manager for the Phoenix Goodyear Airport, said an FAA-approved consultant generated the city's figures, incorporating more factors than do federal projections.

"You kind of have to look at what's happening in the West Valley. The entire West Valley is growing," Newman said.

Phoenix ultimately wants the airport to generate enough revenue cover capital expenses. The airport already covers operating costs, according to a report submitted to Goodyear City Council.

Phoenix will submit an airport layout plan and air traffic projections to the FAA for approval, a step toward securing grant funding.

Aviation officials estimate FAA and Arizona Department of Transportation funds will cover nearly 95 percent of the \$92.1 million plan, with the remaining \$4.1 million coming from Phoenix.

Goodyear would not be responsible for any expenses at the Phoenix-owned airport.

Near-term airport improvements, like airfield signage, runway markings, emergency generators and feasibility studies, are scheduled within the next five years.

Phoenix would revisit the plan in about five years, Newman said.

Residents' views

How do you think planned growth at the Phoenix Goodyear Airport would affect your life in Goodyear?

"I'm (a newcomer) and I like it just the way it is. The growth is getting to be too much, even for me. But I like the idea of the ballpark here, and - it's going to increase the traffic, it's going to increase the noise. We're not bothered by the airport at all."

-Mary Cardinali, 55, of Goodyear. Nurse.

"It would be good, I guess. There's closer work (than going) all the way to Phoenix. It would be nice to work around here."

-Wendy Cuin, 26, of Goodyear Teacher's aide.

"I don't know if I'm going to like that very well because we live pretty close. And all of the noise and stuff - I don't know if that would be good or not."

-Charon Goyen, 48, of Maricopa County. Optician.

"The one thing that Goodyear needs is commercial space. Housing is going to come, that's not a problem. But they need commercial space. The mall is just not going to do it by itself."

-Tim Leonard, 31, of Goodyear. Construction project manager.