



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

AIRPORT AUTHORITIES

Room 417 North, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

September 27, 2006
10:00 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the September 27, 2006 meeting of the Special Committee on Airport Authorities. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Stone called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Jeff Stone, Chair; Reps. Mark Honadel, Fred Kessler, and John Townsend; Sen. Jeff Plale; and Public Members Rich Abelson, Jason Bittner, Terrance Kurtenbach, George Torres, Terry Witkowski, and Dan Wruck.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Public Member Dick Richards.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Scott Grosz, Staff Attorney.

APPEARANCES: Mr. Lars-Oluf Nielsen, Epic Systems Corporation; Charles Hoslet, Managing Director of Corporate Relations, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Pete Bietzel, Vice-President of Business Development, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; Gregg Lindner, President, Lindner Logistics; Mayor Richard Bolender and Patrick DeGrave, City of Oak Creek.

Approval of the Minutes from the September 20, 2006 Meeting

Representative Townsend moved, seconded by Mr. Abelson, to approve the minutes of the committee's September 20, 2006 meeting. The motion carried on a voice vote.

Invited Speakers

Lars-Oluf Nielsen, Epic Systems Corporation, discussed the effect of Wisconsin air transportation on the success of Epic Systems Corporation. Epic Systems Corporation supplies medical software to clients in many major United States cities. The company, based in Verona, Wisconsin, has 2,400 employees. It frequently conducts client training in the Madison area. Mr. Nielsen noted that Wisconsin air transportation creates significant impediments to Epic Systems' ability to conduct business. In particular, he cited a lack of direct flights out of Dane County Regional Airport as a significant problem. Further, he noted the problems with connections to flights out of O'Hare International Airport due to lack of on-time service between Dane County Regional Airport and O'Hare.

Mr. Nielsen also responded to questions from the committee. One question related to the steps Epic Systems takes to solve its problems with Wisconsin air transportation. Mr. Nielsen stated that steps include scheduling trips further in advance and using earlier flights to ensure arrivals at desired times. Mr. Kurtenbach inquired as to whether Epic Systems has contacted the airlines in an attempt to increase the number of direct flights offered to and from the Dane County Regional Airport. He suggested that Epic might resolve some of its problems through that process.

Charles Hoslet, Managing Director of Corporate Relations, University of Wisconsin-Madison, discussed the role of air transportation in the relationship between businesses and the University. He noted the negative impact on businesses due to a lack of direct flights to and from Dane County Regional Airport. Much of this impact comes from inability to gain access to venture capital funding due to lack of high-quality air transportation. He described the positive correlation between access to direct flights and successful development of investment areas across the nation. He also described the addition of a direct Atlanta-Madison flight as a result of negotiations with Delta Airlines. Mr. Hoslet then responded to questions from the committee. The questions related to the negotiations with Delta Airlines as well as sources of information on air travel patterns.

Pete Bietzel, Vice-President of Business Development, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC), described the effect access to air travel has on businesses' decisions on location and relocation. He noted executive travel and training as two reasons why air travel is important. He also described the impact air travel has on a region's ability to draw tourism and convention business. Mr. Bietzel advocated in favor of airport authority governance as a means of ensuring certainty, responsiveness, and cost-savings.

Mr. Bietzel responded to questions from the committee. Several questions related to how a change in governance would ensure an airport's future success. Other questions related to an airport authority's ability to reduce costs. Mr. Bietzel also responded to questions regarding the MMAC position on the state of airline competition at Mitchell International Airport. Additionally, he responded to questions regarding demographic trends in users of Mitchell International Airport.

Gregg Lindner, President, Lindner Logistics, described the impact of Mitchell International Airport on businesses near the airport. According to Mr. Lindner, the airport has a significant, positive impact on businesses at all points in the stream of commerce. He highlighted positive feedback regarding the airport, such as easy access to the area's business districts. He also noted airport expansion as a significant future issue. Mr. Lindner responded to questions from the committee on topics including redevelopment of areas adjacent to Mitchell International Airport and the impact of

Amtrak on local businesses. The committee discussed the relationship between air travel and other modes of transportation.

Mayor Richard Bolender and Patrick DeGrave, City of Oak Creek. Mayor Bolender discussed the concerns of municipalities adjacent to Mitchell International Airport. Oak Creek is situated south of the airport. He emphasized the fear that an airport authority would lack responsibility to local communities. Mayor Bolender described the negative impacts of environmental and noise pollution as well as the negative impact of air traffic. He noted the burden placed on local communities by a service that benefits an entire region. Mr. DeGrave reiterated the concerns raised by Mayor Bolender. He responded to questions from the committee related to planning in the City of Oak Creek.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Chair Stone discussed the tentative agenda for future committee meetings. He also described the role played by the committee in the legislative process. Several committee members inquired as to when the committee would begin to consider drafts of possible legislation. Other members described the need for more information prior to the consideration of possible legislation. Chair Stone noted that the goal of the third meeting is to continue to educate the committee. He emphasized the need for the committee to hear from several more interested parties on the topic of airport authorities.

Other Business

Chair Stone noted the distribution of a Joint Legislative Council mail ballot to add James White, Supervisor, Milwaukee County Board, to the Special Committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be held on *Wednesday, October 25, 2006, at Mitchell International Airport, Milwaukee.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

SG:jal