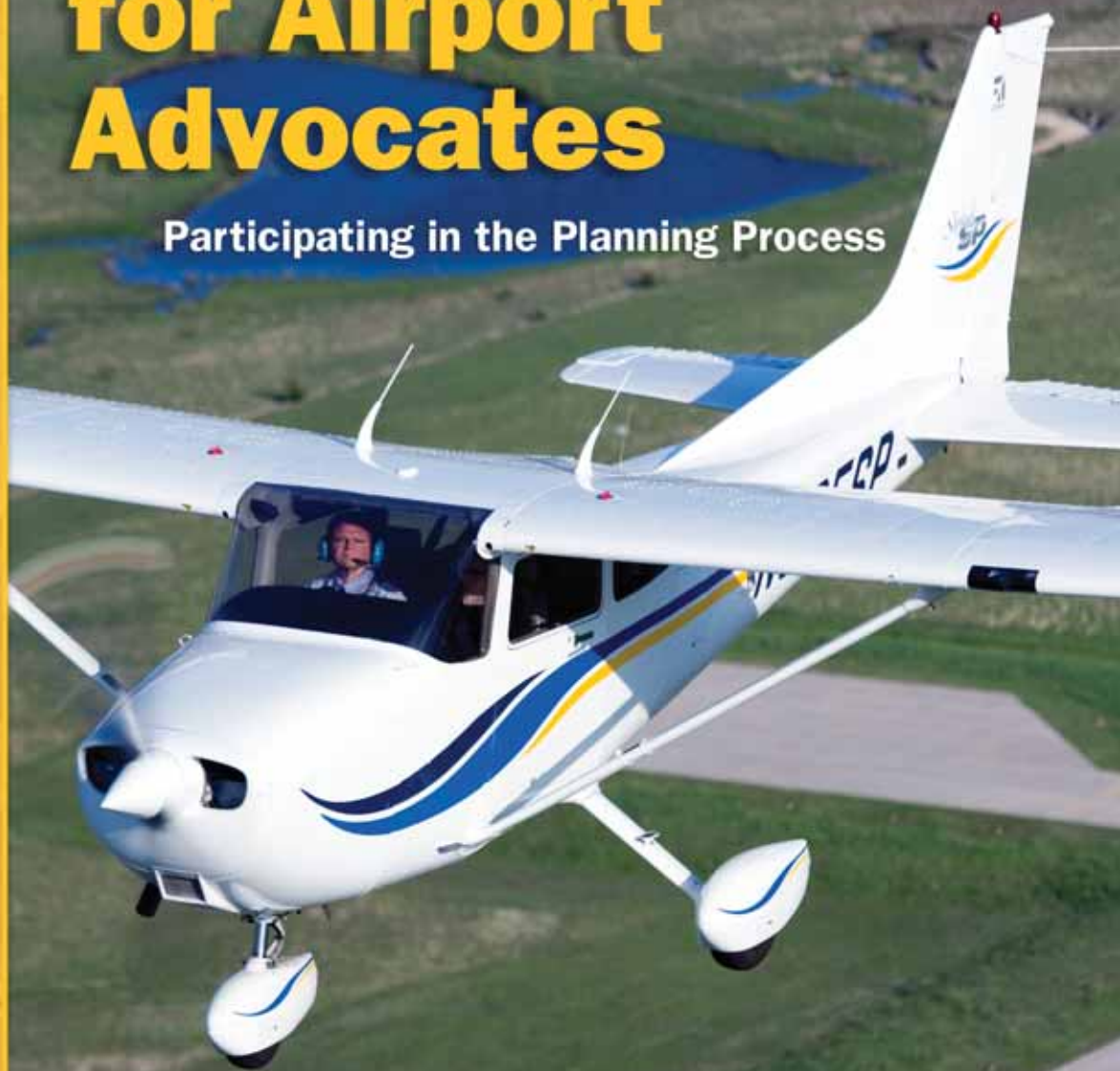


# AOPA's Guide for Airport Advocates

Participating in the Planning Process



**NASAO**  
National Association of State Aviation Officials

Washington State  
Department of Transportation  
Aviation Division

# Sponsors



## National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO)

Founded in 1931, the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) is one of the oldest aviation organizations in the United States, predating even the Federal Aviation Administration's predecessor, the Civil Aeronautics Authority. The states first established NASAO to ensure uniformity of safety measures, standardize airport regulations, and develop a truly national air transportation system responsive to local, state, and regional needs. Since 1931, NASAO has been unique among aviation advocates. Unlike special interest groups, which speak for a single type of aeronautical activity or a narrow band of the rich spectrum of the American aviation community, NASAO represents the men and women in state government aviation agencies who serve the public interest in all 50 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico ([www.nasao.org/nasao\\_members\\_flags.htm](http://www.nasao.org/nasao_members_flags.htm)). These highly skilled professionals are full partners with the federal government in the development and maintenance of the safest and most efficient aviation system in the world.

FAA and NASAO developed a joint statement of agreement on airport land use compatibility. The agreement, first executed in 2005 and updated in 2007, identifies the following objective for this cooperative effort:

*FAA and NASAO share a common interest in protecting the national system of airports as essential to the national air transportation system. Airport land use compatibility policies and practices will help safeguard airport facilities and benefit communities, enhancing our ability to meet future demand for air transportation, with airports viewed as valuable neighbors.*

## AOPA's Airport Support Network

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association created the Airport Support Network, or ASN program, in 1997 to combat the increasing threats against community airports that culminated in record airport closure rates averaging two per week in the mid-1990s. The ASN program was founded on the premise that the best defense against airport threats is local airport advocates. Today, the AOPA Airport Support Network includes 2,000 AOPA members who volunteer to promote, protect, and defend their community airports.



AOPA provides ASN volunteers with direct lines of communication to airport experts and tools to help them learn more about airport advocacy. Most of this information is referenced in this handbook and can be downloaded from AOPA's ASN Web site at [www.aopa.org/asn](http://www.aopa.org/asn).

To learn more about the ASN program or to volunteer, sign up online at [www.aopa.org/asn](http://www.aopa.org/asn) or call AOPA at 800/USA-AOPA (800/872-2672) and ask how you can get involved.

## Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation Division

Airports are critical links in the Washington State Transportation System. With 140 public use airports, the state aviation system plays a crucial role in connecting people to goods and services. It also serves as a critical lifeline to and from rural communities, especially for medical and emergency needs. WSDOT Aviation's mission is to promote the integration of aviation into the Washington State Transportation System to meet the increasing demand for public transportation. WSDOT Aviation is charged with advancing the state's aviation interest in four critical areas: preservation, capacity, safety, and the environment.



Protecting airports from encroachment by incompatible land use is key to fulfilling this mission. Such development can degrade airport operations, impede airport expansion, hamper economic development, and reduce quality of life for airport neighbors. Consistent with the requirements of Washington State's Growth Management Act, WSDOT Aviation provides a technical assistance program to help communities working to protect airports from encroachment by incompatible land use.

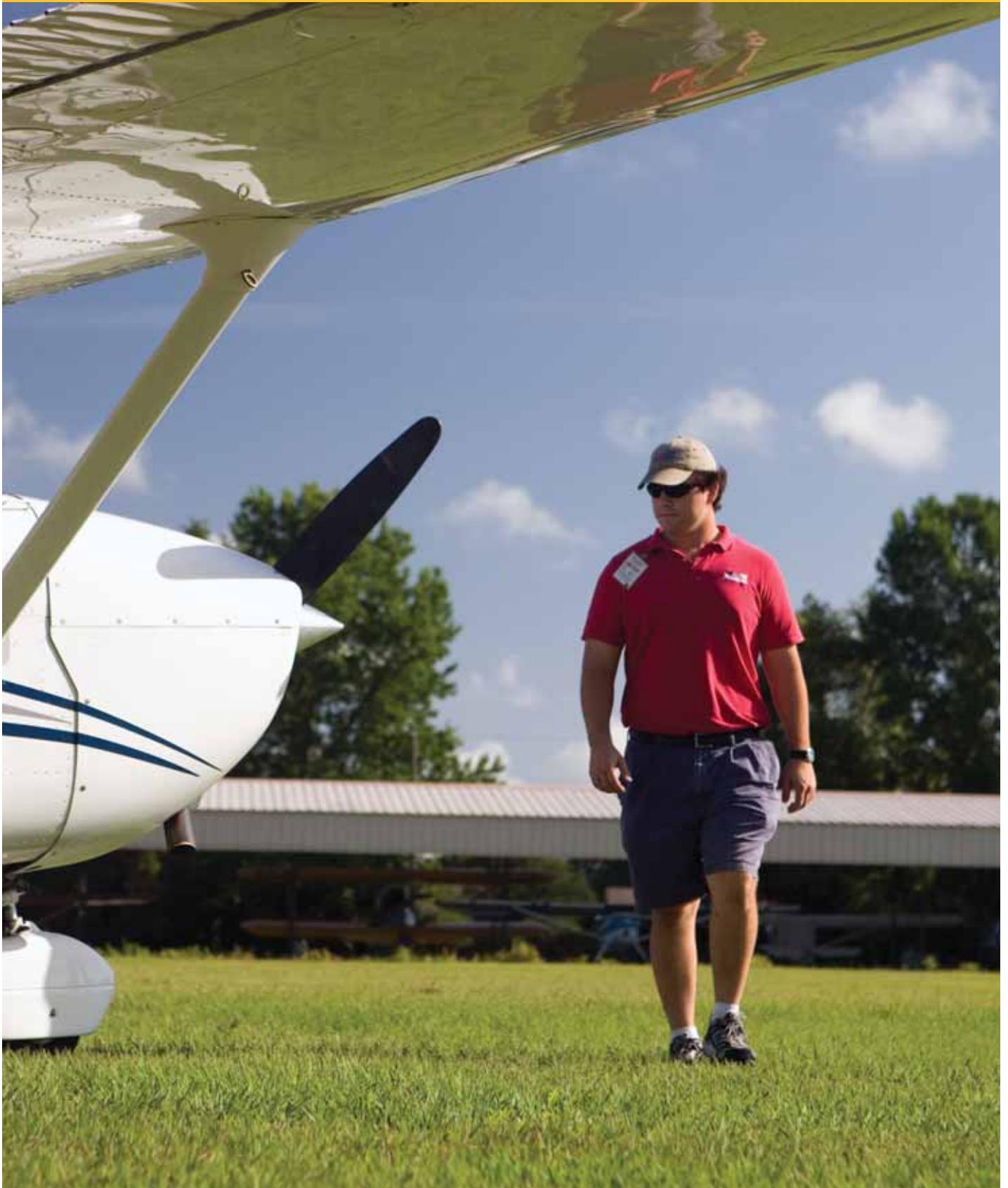
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Published 2008

# Airport Protection 101



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## Airport Protection 101

### **Who are airport advocates?**

An airport advocate is anyone who takes an active interest in a community airport.

An airport advocate may be a pilot, someone who hopes to be a pilot someday, or someone who just enjoys being around aviation. An airport advocate may also be a business owner who relies on the airport to transport products and customers or bring in goods and services. Scout leaders whose troops earn merit badges by using the airport to learn about aviation, business, or economics may be airport advocates. Teachers, guidance counselors, police officers, fire fighters, medical personnel, farmers, and corporate CEOs can also fulfill this role. Anyone who can attest to the many benefits an airport brings to a community can be an airport advocate, and can be one of your allies in airport protection.

Once you are “introduced” to your local airport, there are numerous ways for you to get involved.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), the world’s largest general aviation advocacy organization, helps pilots and non-pilots learn about the benefits of community airports. Airports help drive local economies and play a key role in the provision of emergency services such as medical airlift, fire and rescue, and police.

### **What can airport advocates do to protect airports?**

While AOPA’s staff provides expertise, execution at the local level is critical to success. A collaborative partnership that begins with an AOPA Airport Support Network (ASN) volunteer and connects AOPA, state aviation agencies, and the FAA increases the chances of success in any airport advocacy campaign.

This handbook will guide you through the steps, offer examples of successful advocacy efforts, and introduce you to the terminology, buzz words, political groups, and industry practices that will help you become an effective airport advocate.

▶ Visit [www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org) or [www.gaservingamerica.org](http://www.gaservingamerica.org) to learn more about how you can protect your local airport.

### **INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE**

For airports, compatibility means that a community’s land use development – both existing land uses and those planned for the future – creates an environment that is not detrimental to airport activities. A strong compatibility plan promotes quality of life for all members of the community by supporting land uses that protect the airport as a transportation facility and economic resource and promoting development patterns that minimize negative impacts to health, safety and well-being. Ultimately, compatibility planning should minimize constraints necessitated by incompatible development and prevent development of incompatible land uses that unnecessarily expose the general public to noise and risk.

Communities address airport land use compatibility in a variety of ways based on the unique characteristics of an individual airport facility as well as numerous other factors that are specific to their area. In practice, this generally means that areas located close to airport property should be low-density, low-intensity, with little residential development. Land use development with more people per acre and/or more dwelling units per acre can be allowed as distance from the airport boundary increases. Residential development, schools, hospitals and other medical facilities are discouraged adjacent to airports. Most commercial and industrial land uses are considered compatible.

# Why should airport advocates be concerned about airport land use compatibility?



“One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency.”

—Arnold Glasgow

## Why should airport advocates be concerned about airport land use compatibility?

One of the main challenges facing aviation today is the encroachment of incompatible land uses near airports. Such development can degrade airport operations, impede airport expansion, and reduce quality of life for airport neighbors. The safety of people in the air and on the ground is also a concern. Encroachment is a key factor contributing to escalating operating costs and restriction of airport operations; it has even resulted in closure of many general aviation airports in the United States.

Airport advocates should be concerned about land use compatibility as an airport preservation issue for the following reasons:

### Incompatible development threatens the long-term viability of an airport.

#### Example: Scottsdale, AZ

The City of Scottsdale, Arizona, completed a noise compatibility study in 2005 that demonstrates the effect of encroachment on airport

operations. The report describes how, over a 40-year period, noise complaints have increased at the same rate as residential development adjacent to the airport, despite the airport’s efforts to minimize noise problems by instituting “fly friendly” policies, limiting operating hours, and taking other measures.

#### Example: Vancouver, WA

In an even more extreme case, Evergreen Airport, a privately-owned, public-use airport located in southwest Washington State, closed in 2006 when its owners sold the airport property to developers. Prior to its closure, the airport was home to 60 based aircraft and an active general aviation community. This region is one of the fastest growing in the state and is projected to have a shortfall in aircraft storage capacity by 2030.

▶ For more information about land uses that may or may not be compatible with airports, see one of the handbooks provided by state aviation agencies. A list of documents is available on AOPA Online at [www.aopa.org/asn/statelandusedocuments](http://www.aopa.org/asn/statelandusedocuments)



April 1959



FEBRUARY 1996



AUGUST 2006

*These photos show the spread of urban development around Evergreen Field in Vancouver, Washington. The airport closed in summer 2006 to make way for a mixed-use development including retail, office, and residential units after the original owner passed away and his heirs sold the land to developers.*



**Federal programs require grant recipients to ensure compatible land use. Effective land use policies will become an increasingly important factor as competition for project funding intensifies.**

The FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides grants to airport sponsors for the planning and development of public-use airports that are included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). The NPIAS, which is prepared and published every 2 years by the FAA, identifies public-use airports that are important to public transportation and contribute to the needs of civil aviation, national defense, and the Postal service. Recipients of AIP funds commit to protecting the airport from encroachment in two ways: 1) preventing the establishment of height hazards; and 2) taking appropriate action, including zoning, to restrict use of land in the vicinity of the airport to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations. Many organizations are encouraging the FAA to more strongly enforce these provisions, and having airport protections in place may increase the likelihood of an airport receiving grants.

**Local agencies control land use development within their jurisdiction.**

Because land use decisions are under the purview of local governments, appeals to the FAA and state aviation agencies may not be effective. The FAA has no enforcement authority; violations of compatible land use requirements can only be sanctioned by withholding funds, which hurts the airport and the aviation community. States have limited enforcement authority that varies from state to state.

Local agencies that issue building permits and authorize construction are ultimately responsible for land use development within their jurisdictions. However, they may have a limited understanding of air transportation and airport land use compatibility issues. In fact, they may not be aware of the issues at all. Airport advocates can educate local officials through active participation in the planning process.

**A proactive approach to airport land use compatibility helps conserve resources and build relationships so future efforts can be channeled into airport improvement.**

Often airport advocates and local government officials first meet because of controversy over land use issues. These adversarial situations can cause bitterness that makes it more difficult to find mutually beneficial solutions. By getting to know local officials before there is a problem, airport advocates can benefit from stronger relationships and may be able to resolve challenges with less controversy.

**Example: California's Airport Land Use Commission**

California takes a proactive approach to land use planning. In that state, public-use airports are protected by the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) provision of the Public Utilities Code, specifically Section 21670 through Section 21679.5. This law, with some exceptions, requires counties with a public-use airport to establish an airport land use commission "to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring the orderly expansion of airports and the adoption of land use measures that minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within areas around public airports to the extent that these areas are not already devoted to incompatible uses." There are also provisions for alternative processes for establishing ALUCs.

California's Education Code, Section 1721, provides additional protections for airports when it comes to site selection for public and charter schools. Specifically, any school district proposing to place a school within two miles of an airport runway, or even a potential airport runway

▶ **References to the Public Utility Codes, Education Code and other California laws relating to airports can be found at [www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/documents/ALUP/CT%20ALUPH%20Appendix%20A%20-%20207-02rev.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/documents/ALUP/CT%20ALUPH%20Appendix%20A%20-%20207-02rev.pdf)**





*The success achieved is directly attributable to the cooperative process that involves the utilization of an advisory committee to help identify and resolve airport noise issues.*

included in a master plan, must notify the state Department of Education that in turn must notify the state Department of Transportation to investigate the site and submit a report of its findings and recommendations. If the DOT finds the site to be incompatible, state and local funds may not be used to acquire the property or fund the school.

#### **Example: Connecticut's Protection for Privately Owned Airports**

Connecticut law provides additional layers of protection for certain privately owned public-use airports in the state. The measure grants the state the first opportunity to buy a privately owned airport to protect it from being closed. However, that right extends only to private airports that have paved runways and a minimum of 5,000 annual operations. Those airports are also eligible to receive 90-percent state funding for capital improvements, and the state's commissioner of transportation can purchase development rights around the airport to protect it from encroachment. The law, which took effect July 1, 2007, also creates a new airport zoning category to protect the airport's imaginary surfaces. The law, which provides innovative legal options for protecting privately owned airports, is the result of local activism and AOPA efforts in the state legislature.

▶ **For more information, see p. 11 Sec 50 at [www.cga.ct.gov/2007/amd/h/pdf/2007HB-07367-R00HA-AMD.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/amd/h/pdf/2007HB-07367-R00HA-AMD.pdf)**

#### **Example: Portland International Airport's Advisory Committee**

At this Oregon airport, an advisory committee that includes government officials and airport advocates has laid the foundation for cooperative efforts to protect the airport and the surrounding community.

The Port of Portland's cooperative approach to airport noise compatibility planning has produced a plan that seeks to balance the concerns of the community with the needs of the airport and its users. This plan has reduced the number of residents within the 55 Day/Night decibel sound level (or "Ldn") contour by 85 percent, without employing costly operating restrictions. The success achieved is directly attributable to the cooperative process that involves the utilization of an advisory committee to help identify and resolve airport noise issues. This committee, consisting of all parties having an interest in the airport noise issue, has worked together since 1982 in structuring and implementing the noise abatement plan. This plan is made up of three interrelated programs: an operational program, a land use program, and a review and monitoring program. The operational program includes specific flight track assignments, while the land use program requires sound insulation of some residential dwellings, and adoption of city and county noise overlay zones. The review and monitoring program is the part of the plan that insures the ongoing cooperative process, and maintains compatibility with the community.

*Source: Newell, John P. The cooperative approach to noise compatibility planning at Portland International Airport. Acoustical Society of America Digital Library.*

# Why should airport advocates be involved in land use planning?



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“Government is too important to be left to the politicians.”

—Chester Bowles

## **Why should airport advocates be involved in land use planning?**

Participating in the local planning process is the best way to ensure that the needs of your airport are understood and protected. Here’s why:

### **Reason 1:** Get in on the ground floor

#### **Local planning sets the policy foundation that guides development patterns around airports.**

Airport advocates tend to focus on individual development projects proposed in areas adjacent to aviation facilities. However, once a project gets to this phase, it is generally too late to affect the outcome. Many communities set out their long-term development goals and policies in a master plan, also called a comprehensive plan, general plan, city plan, development plan, growth management plan, or policy plan. This document is used to create regulations, such as zoning, to implement the local government’s vision for physical development of the community. It determines where growth will occur, where roads will be built, and where sewer lines will be

installed. Early consideration of airport land use compatibility is critically important, especially given the dwindling land supply in metropolitan areas that contributes to development pressures. It is here, in developing and maintaining the master plan, that airport advocates can be most effective in influencing development patterns near airports.

The following examples illustrate the effectiveness of this approach:

#### **Example: Arizona Airport Zoning**

In Arizona, Arizona Revised Statutes Title 28, Chapter 25, Article 7: “Airport Zoning and Regulation” is implemented voluntarily by local municipalities. It encourages responsible zoning around airports to protect these facilities from incompatible land use. It also protects the state’s nearly \$16 million in contributions to these facilities each year. Unfortunately, not all airport sponsors in Arizona have adopted zoning protection measures or compatible land use plans consistent with airport overlay districts. Generating awareness of these statutes among local airport supporters can make a difference in protecting airports. These statutes can also serve as a model for other states.



### **Example: Prescott, AZ**

In 1999, an application for residential development less than a mile off the end of Runway 12 at Earnest A. Love Field in Prescott, Arizona, was denied by the city council even though the application met all existing zoning requirements and the developer threatened to sue. The AOPA Airport Support Network volunteer alerted AOPA to the issue and was able to garner local support for the council's opposition through the Prescott Airport Users Association.

Ultimately, the city council stood firm, citing the need to protect the health and welfare of its citizens. In 2001, the City of Prescott initiated a program to actively protect its airport by developing an Airport Specific Area Plan. Because the airport is owned by the city but most of the surrounding land is under county jurisdiction, advocates needed to take a cooperative approach, engaging nearby Chino Valley, Prescott Valley, neighboring land owners, and Yavapai County in the effort. In 2004 the City of Prescott created its Comprehensive General Plan, which further defined its goals and objectives for the protection of the airport and promotion of compatible development.

### **Example: Bakersfield, CA**

In 2006, the Bakersfield, California, City Council asked the FAA for permission to close the federally obligated Bakersfield Municipal Airport. The council wanted to redevelop the land for low income housing. The FAA responded with an emphatic "no" in a letter listing the key reasons we need to protect our national airport system. In 2007, AOPA was alerted by a member that the same council member who brought forward the closure motion was making another attempt to close the airport, this time by proposing to redefine previously protected safety zones to allow high density development at the end of the runway. The safety zone, originally set in accordance with the California Department of Transportation's "California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook"

([www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/htmlfile/landuse.php](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/htmlfile/landuse.php)), was larger than that prescribed by the FAA. AOPA joined local pilots to oppose the measure, which was voted down by the council 4-3. The California Department of Transportation, also known as Caltrans, also publishes a pamphlet ([www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/documents/ALUCbrochure2.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/planning/aeronaut/documents/ALUCbrochure2.pdf)) on responsible land use planning around airports that can serve as a model for other states.

## **Reason 2: "All politics is local"**

State law sets a broad framework for planning and sets minimum requirements for local governments, but each community must ultimately make local decisions to guide future development. Local planning is more responsive to local concerns than to input from state and federal agencies or national organizations. Local developers are also politically active and promise economic benefits to their communities.

### **State and federal agencies have limited roles to play—some provide oversight, others provide technical assistance.**

#### **Example: Washington State's Airport Land Use Compatibility Law**

In Washington State, the Airport Land Use Compatibility Law (RCW 36.70.547, General aviation airport—Siting of incompatible uses) provides both guidance and technical assistance for developing comprehensive plans that protect airports, as the excerpt below shows:

"Every county, city, and town in which there is located a general aviation airport that is operated for the benefit of the general public, whether publicly owned or privately owned public-use, shall, through its comprehensive plan and development regulations, discourage the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to such general aviation airport. Such plans and regulations may only be adopted or amended after formal consultation with: airport owners and managers, private airport operators, general aviation pilots, ports, and the aviation division of the department of transportation. All proposed and adopted plans and regulations shall be filed with the aviation division of the department of transportation within a reasonable time after release for public consideration and comment. Each county, city, and town may obtain technical assistance from the aviation division of the department of transportation to develop plans and regulations consistent with this section."

### **National organizations can offer support, but they need the active participation of the community to prevail**

#### **Example: St. Petersburg, FL**

When Albert Whitted Airport in St. Petersburg, Florida, was threatened with closure in exchange for development in 2003, it was not the airport's first battle to stay alive. Often, the same airports are threatened time and again, and vigilance by airport supporters is the first and most critical line of defense. In 2003, the

*Any airport in any setting may be compromised by one or more of the top three airport threats: incompatible land use or zoning, noise, and development pressures.*

proposal to close the airport was taken to a referendum vote in the November elections.

AOPA worked hand-in-hand with local airport advocates and motivated citizens outside the aviation community to educate the voters of St. Petersburg about the value of Albert Whitted and the pitfalls of alternative development. AOPA's Airport Support Network volunteer, Jack Tunstill, was, in many ways, the face of the issue. He gave three or more speeches a day to civic groups and was a major spokesman for the airport in the media. A local flight instructor, Tunstill spoke with authority on the value of the airport to the community.

Ruth Varn, who was awarded AOPA's Sharples Award in 1986 for her airport activism the last time the airport was threatened, headed the Albert Whitted Advisory Committee and the Albert Whitted Political Action Committee. The groups' educational and advocacy efforts included advertising in the St. Petersburg Times and posting political signs around town guiding voters on the multiple ballot issues affecting the airport. The Albert Whitted Preservation Society held an air show at the airport to help promote it to the community and conducted "support Albert Whitted" demonstrations.

Some 1,600 volunteers, nearly 1,200 of whom were simply airport supporters and not necessarily pilots, were involved. Their efforts resulted in victory (by a 3-1 margin) for the airport and showed the mayor Albert Whitted's value to his constituents. The airport has since begun construction on a \$4 million terminal.

**Local airport advocates have a very important role to play as citizens, taxpayers, and voters.**

Any airport in any setting may be compromised by one or more of the top three airport threats: incompatible land use or zoning, noise, and development pressures. Often, an airport is threatened by all three at once. When you add in additional challenges unique to the airport's location, its fate becomes increasingly bleak. But all these obstacles can be overcome if you have a vocal group of taxpaying voters supporting the airport.

**Example: Leesburg, VA**

In Loudoun County, Virginia, Leesburg Executive Airport is the only publicly owned public-use airport in one of the nation's fastest growing counties. Located within a special carve out of the Air Defense Identification Zone veil (30 nm from Washington, D.C.) and under the Washington Dulles International Airport Class B airspace, Leesburg Executive is situated within the boundary of the Town of Leesburg, but all property beyond the airport's "fence" is under the jurisdiction of the County of Loudoun.

Such cross-jurisdictional influence areas, though common at U.S. airports, add to the complexity when a developer proposes building houses on land adjoining the airport, as happened at Leesburg. As the airport sponsor, the town was obligated via the grants it accepted from the federal government "to take, to the extent reasonable, appropriate action including zoning to restrict the use of lands in the vicinity of the airport to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations." (See FAA Order 5190.6a, Chapter 4, Section 3.) However, the county controlled the zoning for the land to be developed. Since the FAA does not have statutory power to control zoning, the only recourse for the airport was to rely on the support of voters in the county.

Members of the Leesburg Airport Commission, the mayor, and town council all opposed the development. They rallied local pilots and anti-growth leaders, including a politically influential environmental group that viewed the airport as green space, to oppose the pro-development county board of supervisors.

During county public hearings over the next 12 months, voters continuously spoke out against the development and AOPA weighed in. In the end it was local residents—voters—who were the key to protecting the airport. Individuals called and e-mailed county supervisors and attended county hearings, and ultimately the county board of supervisors voted 8-1 against the development.

**City of St. Petersburg, Florida**

**Estimated Number of Registered Voters = 184,000**  
*(zip codes: 33701; 33702; 33703; 33704; 33705; 33707; 33709; 33710; 33712; 33713; 33714; 33715; 33716)*

**AOPA members = 464**  
**Percentage = .2%**

St. Petersburg and Leesburg both demonstrate that voter influence is the secret weapon in ensuring airport survival.

### **Reason 3:** The squeaky wheel gets the grease

Local planning depends on participation from a diverse range of interests and stakeholders to define community needs and identify solutions. While state law confers responsibility for airport land use compatibility on local governments, all citizens have an important role to play in the process by sharing their concerns with the community—interests that are not represented often are not addressed. Airport advocates should ensure they have a place at the table so they can educate other citizens and local leaders about the importance of air transportation to their community.

#### **Example: Crystal, MN**

The Minneapolis Airport Commission, known as the MAC, sponsors seven airports in the Twin Cities region—the major international airport, Minneapolis-Saint Paul, as well as six relievers including Crystal Airport, located in the suburban city of Crystal, Minnesota. While these airports are governed by the MAC in terms of airport sponsorship rules and guidelines, the municipalities in which each is located retain all governance over the land beyond the airports' boundaries.

In 2004, Crystal Airport was facing serious threats of closure from two adversaries: the airport sponsor (MAC) and the city of Crystal. AOPA's Airport Support Network volunteer, Kevin Rebman, immediately became involved, gathering facts, attending meetings, and rallying local support for the airport.

In a single weekend, Rebman collected more than 500 signatures supporting the airport. He took this support public by hosting airport open houses, meeting airport neighbors, and working with the airport sponsor to show the airport's viability. Once the sponsor ended its calls for closure, the city focused on how it could redevelop the airport. Rebman and his active airport support group again turned to the community, which told its elected officials they like the airport where it is and as it is. Today, the city is working with airport supporters to create economic development that is compatible with the airport.



*The deconstruction of the top two stories of a San Diego office building located within one mile of Montgomery Fields marked a significant victory for airport protection.*

#### **Example: San Diego, CA**

San Diego's Montgomery Field, located in the city's northeast suburbs, is one of the latest victims of incompatible land use in areas once called rural. When the Sunroad development company planned a new 12-story building less than one mile from Montgomery Field, AOPA Airport Support Network volunteer Rick Beach contacted the FAA, the California Department of Transportation, the City of San Diego, and AOPA to help stop the construction, which was already underway.

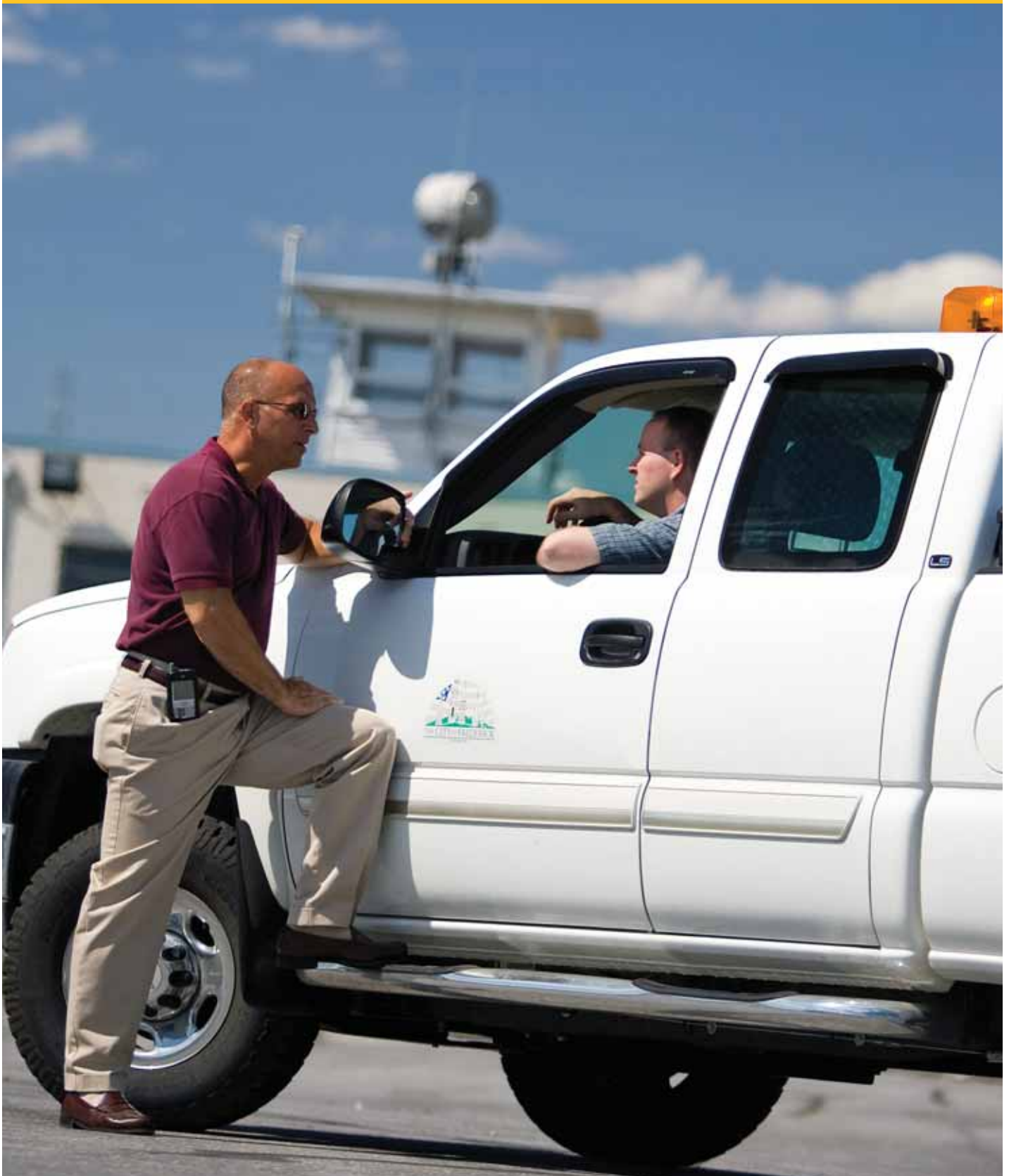
The FAA issued a determination that the structure would create an obstruction and hazard to air navigation but could not enforce it. The FAA also warned the city that further construction would jeopardize future funding eligibility for San Diego's other airport—Brown Field. Despite these warnings, construction continued.

AOPA and Beach appealed to the state department of transportation, known as Caltrans, which also condemned the project, noting it violated federal, state, and city codes. By the end of 2006, the city of San Diego filed suit against the developer, asking the court to stop the construction. AOPA soon joined the lawsuit, as well as a local pilot coalition known as Community Airfields Association of San Diego (CAASD).

Ultimately, the mayor of San Diego issued an order for the contractor to remove the top 20 feet of the building, and Sunroad finally acquiesced. Today, the Sunroad project serves as a nationwide warning to developers who defy local, state, and federal authorities.



# Where are the critical opportunities to get involved?





## Where are the critical opportunities to get involved?

### The Local Planning Process

#### Typical local planning responsibilities:

- **Regional or metropolitan transportation plan:** a cooperative effort developed by a regional planning agency that addresses transportation priorities throughout a region.
- **Comprehensive plan:** a locality's plan for where growth will occur.
- **District plans:** planning documents that address growth and development for part of a municipality. District plans also include neighborhood plans and sub-area plans. These plans address a smaller geographic area than the comprehensive plan, but often influence airports depending on their scope and approach.
- **Development regulations or zoning:** rules determining how growth occurs, such as whether commercial, residential, or industrial development will be allowed within a given area.
- **Building permit:** a document review and permit issuance process designed to ensure that individual construction projects follow local requirements.
- **Environmental review:** a formal process for soliciting public comment on the effects of a particular development proposal or planning effort.
- **Airport master plan or airport layout plan:** documents that serve as a roadmap and capital facility plan for the airport. See FAA Advisory Circular 150/5070-6B, Airport Master Plans (published May 01, 2007) to learn how the master plan process works, including how your airport can apply for federal funds.
- **Economic impact review and analysis:** a study that provides the public with relevant information regarding the return on investment for a development project. The management of financial and real estate resources is decided directly by government officials or indirectly by citizen voting. Economic impact provides a metric for comparison to other possible investment projects.



#### What is an economic impact analysis?

##### A study that:

- Is based on the theory that a dollar flowing into a local economy from outside of the economy is a net benefit.
- Measures new economic benefits that accrue to the region due to the airport that would not have otherwise occurred.
- Provides a metric for comparison to other public projects in terms of rate of return on investment (ROI).
- Is used by airports to explicitly demonstrate their economic impact on the surrounding community.

A list of economic impact reports prepared by state aviation agencies is available at [www.aopa.org/asn/stateeconomicreports](http://www.aopa.org/asn/stateeconomicreports)

#### Local planning agencies and organizations:

- **Planning and zoning commission:** a panel, typically appointed by elected officials, that performs planning tasks and makes recommendations incorporating public comment into the decision making process.
- **Airport board or commission:** a panel, typically appointed by elected officials, that works on airport-related issues. Some airport boards make advisory recommendations to the airport sponsor while others have decision making authority. Most airport boards are responsible for incorporating public comment into decision making.



- **Citizen advisory committee or neighborhood planning committee:** a panel that is either self-appointed or appointed by elected officials to develop sub-area plans or neighborhood plans, and lead other specialized planning efforts. Provides input on planning issues as assigned and makes recommendations to the planning commission and/or elected officials.
- **City or town council:** a panel composed of elected officials that may also serve as an official airport sponsor. This council makes final decisions on most land use planning actions within its jurisdiction.
- **County commission or board of supervisors:** a panel composed of elected officials that may also serve as official airport sponsor. This group makes final decisions on most land use planning actions within its jurisdiction.
- **Port authority:** a body governed by an elected board that may serve as an official airport sponsor.
- **Metropolitan planning organization (MPO):** an organization of elected officials in urbanized regions with populations of at least 50,000. MPOs provide a forum for local decision making on regional transportation issues.

Under federal law, the policy for the metropolitan planning process is to promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns. MPO decisions may influence airport development as well as ground transportation access, land uses, and development patterns around airports.

### The State Planning Process

#### Typical state planning responsibilities:

- **Airport land use compatibility:** Most state transportation and/or aviation departments serve as technical advisors to local jurisdictions. Some states have authority to approve or reject plans and set planning requirements. Several states have been designated by the FAA as “block grant states.” State aviation agencies in block grant states are responsible for dispersing Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds allocated by the FAA to each eligible airport that has applied. The departments of transportation in block grant states may have some latitude when disbursing the funds. Block grant states include Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.

- **Grant assurances:** States that provide their own grant funding for local airport improvement projects generally attach a series of obligations funding recipients must fulfill. States can withhold funds or require repayment of funds if the grant assurances are not met.
- **State transportation plan:** a policy document that guides development of the state's transportation system in coordination with federal transportation planning.
- **State aviation system plan:** a policy document that guides development of the state's aviation system in coordination with the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS).

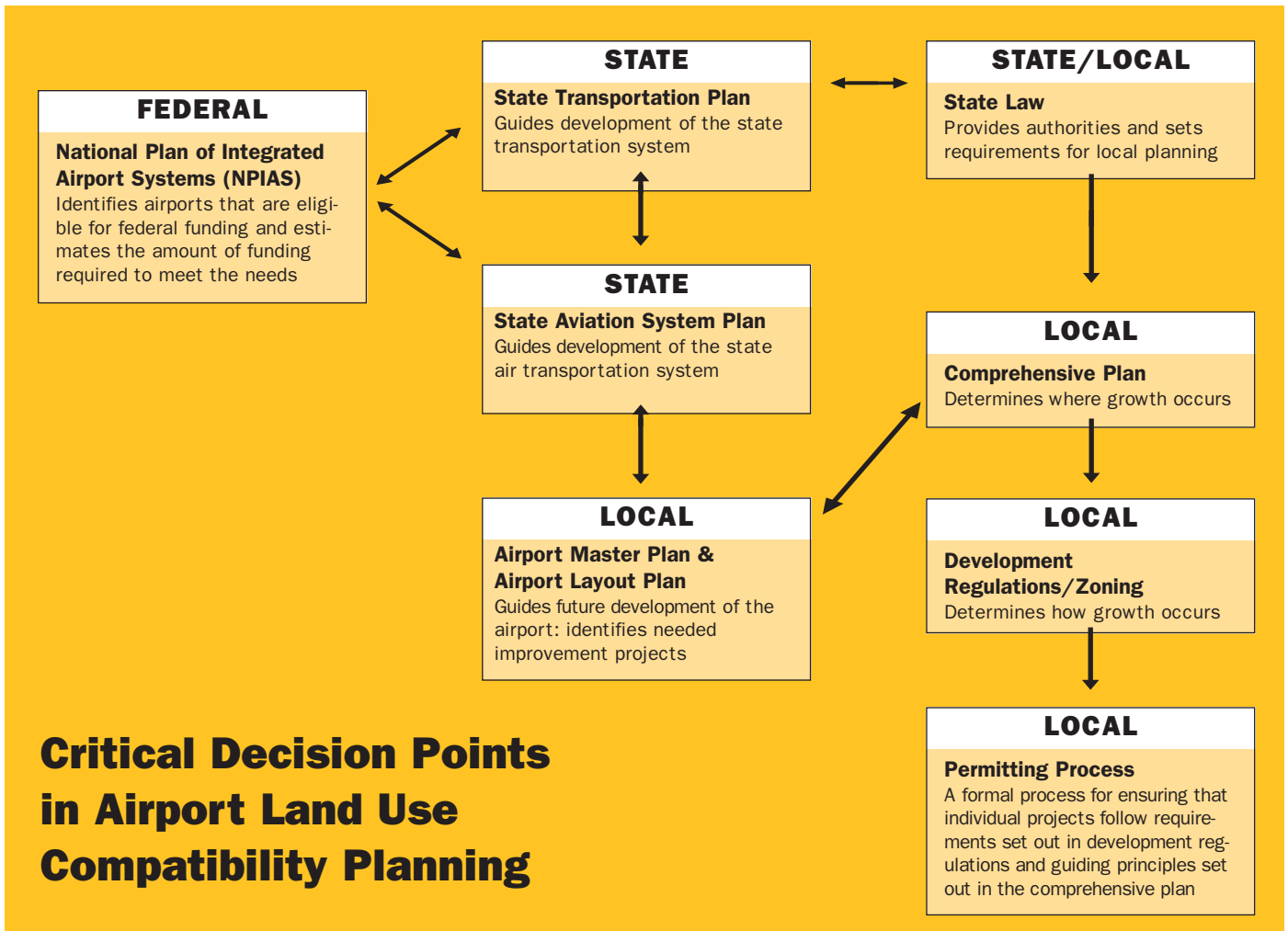
## The Federal Planning Process

### Federal planning responsibilities:

- **National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS):** a plan that identifies more than 3,300 airports that are significant to national air transportation and thus eligible to receive federal grants under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) ([www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/aip](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/aip)) The plan also includes estimates of the amount of AIP money needed to fund infrastructure development projects that will bring these airports up to current design standards and add capacity at congested airports. Every two years, FAA is required to provide Congress with an estimate of AIP-eligible development for the next five years. (See [www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/planning\\_capacity/npias/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/planning_capacity/npias/))
- **Grant assurances:** a series of obligations attached to airport sponsors that accept federal funding. The FAA can withhold funds or require repayment of funds if the grant

### What states typically cannot do:

- Develop plans for local communities
- Approve or deny applications for development
- Remove or stop construction of an airspace obstruction
- Force airports to remain open



assurances are not met. For more information, see FAA's Web site at [http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/aip/grant\\_assurances/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/aip/grant_assurances/). AOPA provides additional information in its Guide to FAA

▶ See Advisory Circular 150/5020-1, **Noise Control and Compatible Planning for Airports - Contact the FAA Airport Planning and Programming Office or go to [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov) and enter "150 5020" in the search bar.**

Airport Compliance: [www.aopa.org/asn/airport\\_compliance.pdf](http://www.aopa.org/asn/airport_compliance.pdf).

- **Part 77:** a section of the Federal Aviation Regulations that establishes standards for determining obstructions to navigable airspace and the effects of such obstructions on the safe and efficient use of that airspace. The regulations require that the FAA be notified of proposed construction or alteration of

▶ See also, **AOPA's Guide to Airport Noise and Land Use Compatibility** ([www.aopa.org/asn/land\\_use/](http://www.aopa.org/asn/land_use/)).

objects—whether permanent, temporary, or of natural growth—if those objects would be of a height to exceed the FAR Part 77 criteria ([http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/regional\\_guidance/central/construction/part77/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/regional_guidance/central/construction/part77/)). When notified of proposed construction, the FAA conducts an aeronautical study to determine whether the object would constitute an airspace hazard.

- **Part 150:** a section of the Federal Aviation Regulations that establishes a voluntary program that airports can use to conduct airport

noise compatibility planning. The regulation ([http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/environmental/airport\\_noise/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/environmental/airport_noise/)) also prescribes a system for measuring airport noise impacts and presents guidelines for identifying incompatible land uses. Certain airports that choose to undertake a Part 150 study are eligible for federal funding both for the study itself and for implementation of approved components of the local program.

- Provides general guidance for noise control and compatibility planning for airports as well as specific guidance for preparation of airport noise exposure maps and airport noise compatibility programs by airport operators for submission under Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 150, and the Aviation Safety and Noise Abatement Act of 1979. Contains an expanded Table of Land Uses Normally Compatible with Various Levels of Noise.
- **Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis (OE/AAA):** In administering Title 14 of Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations, the prime objectives of the FAA are to promote air safety and the efficient use of the navigable airspace. To accomplish this mission, aeronautical studies are conducted based on information provided by proponents on an FAA Form 7460-1, "Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration". The FAA solicits public comment on its airport analyses ([www.oaaaa.faa.gov](http://www.oaaaa.faa.gov)).

**What the FAA cannot do:**

- Develop plans for local communities
- Approve or deny applications for development
- Remove or stop construction of an airspace obstruction
- Force airports (without current grant obligations or that are not surplus property) to remain open



# Planning Advocate's Toolkit: Take Action



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“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

—Antoine de Saint Exupery

## Planning Advocate’s Toolkit: Take Action

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### Best Practices

#### **How can airport advocates maximize the effectiveness of their participation?**

##### **Step 1: Define Your Airport**

Before you can advocate in favor of your airport, you must understand it. Think of it like buying a house: you want to gather all information regarding its history, neighborhood, and potential before you sign on the dotted line. You can do the same thing for your airport. The first thing to do is “define” your airport.

#### **What is the airport’s history and current status?**

- Is it privately owned or publicly owned?
- Who owns or “sponsors” your airport? (If it is publicly owned, the owner is called the “sponsor”.)
- Is it eligible to receive money from the federal government? From the state?
- Is it a surplus property (land “given” to the sponsor by the federal government to be used only as an airport)?
- Does the airport have direct income generation such as fuel sales, hangars, or businesses?
- What are the indirect income generators from the airport? These may include businesses that rely on it for goods, services, and transportation.
- What is the activity level at the airport (i.e. number of based aircraft and annual operations; aviation activities that take place at the airport.)
- Does the airport house emergency response services such as police, fire, or medical airlift?
- When was the last economic impact analysis conducted?
- When was the last airport master plan review?

#### **What is the “neighborhood” like?**

- What is the zoning around the airport?
- Who owns the land under the airport traffic pattern?
- Do you live in a district where you are eligible to participate in planning meetings?
- Do you vote for elected officials who oversee the local planning process?

#### **What is your airport’s potential?**

- Has the airport accepted federal and/or state grant funding? (If so, most grants or investments from the federal government and state aviation agencies require the airport sponsor to keep the airport open in a safe condition for 20 years from the date of the grant’s issuance.)
- Are there businesses in the community that rely on the airport?
- Are community outreach activities, such as open houses, airport fairs, aviation exhibits, or other draws currently underway?

#### **Who are the airport’s allies?**

- Elected officials
- Service clubs
- Planners
- Chamber of commerce
- Community business leaders
- Emergency management personnel
- Law enforcement personnel
- Medical personnel

##### **Step 2: Take Advantage of Opportunities to Participate**

- Get to know planning staff in the local government and at the airport before problems arise.
- Attend public meetings.
- Offer testimony at public hearings.

- Submit written comments on airport issues to elected officials.
- Provide educational materials for planning staff, elected officials, and other community leaders.
- Engage potential opponents, including the real estate community and airport neighbors.
- Track airspace obstruction evaluations using the FAA's public notification system available at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>.
- Write letters to the editor of the local newspaper.
- Run for elected office.
- Form a political action committee.
- Reach out to potential supporters and form local support groups.
- Mobilize local AOPA members.

#### Resources:

- AOPA materials are available at [www.aopa.org/asn](http://www.aopa.org/asn).
- For information about providing formal written comment, see [www.aopa.org/whatsnew/cityguide.html](http://www.aopa.org/whatsnew/cityguide.html).
- For information about developing educational materials, see [www.aopa.org/asn/airportvalue](http://www.aopa.org/asn/airportvalue).

#### Step 3: Utilize Proven Strategies

- Pursue win-win solutions in order to achieve mutually beneficial agreements.
- Develop personal working relationships with stakeholders and decision makers.
- Build credibility by using facts to support arguments.

- Educate community leaders about the value of air transportation. An easy way to do this is by showing AOPA's "Local Airports: Access to America" DVD to local civics groups and economic development leaders. Call AOPA at 800/USA-AOPA (800/872-2672) for a copy.

- Reach out to potential opponents, including airport neighbors and the real estate and development community, early and often.
- Get involved in comprehensive planning and policymaking activities.

#### Media Resources:

When the media has questions about your local airport, be prepared with facts and talking points. AOPA offers numerous materials to help you. If you have questions, need additional help, or just would prefer to have AOPA professional staff speak to the media for you, call AOPA's 24-hour media relations hotline at 301/695-2162. Or, you can simply have the reporter make the call.

General aviation can be a very sensitive topic in the media. Reporters are not enemies; they are under a great deal of pressure to become experts on subjects in a matter of hours. Offering to assist the reporters assigned to your area before a situation arises is helpful for the airport and the reporter.

#### Following are some tips provided by AOPA to help make the most of the media for your airport's advocacy:

- Review AOPA's Guide to Obtaining Community Support for your Local Airport, Chapter 2, titled, "Public Relations Plans for Airports." This chapter focuses on how you can develop relationships with local media, how to gather and present facts, and suggestions for community outreach. See [www.aopa.org/asn/apsup02.html](http://www.aopa.org/asn/apsup02.html).
- Visit "AOPA's Online Communications Tool Kit" at [www.aopa.org/info/comres4u.html](http://www.aopa.org/info/comres4u.html) for more information on how you can effectively advocate on behalf of your airport with the public and media. You'll find detailed information on a variety of approaches and topics.
- **AOPA's Guide to Talking to Reporters** will teach you the basic tips to talk to the media. See <http://media.aopa.org/mediatraining/AOPAMediaTraining.html>
- **AOPA's Guide to Learning to Fly** provides a non-technical overview of what's involved in becoming a pilot, with a strong emphasis on debunking popular misconceptions about GA. See [www.aopa.org/members/files/guides/learntofly.html](http://www.aopa.org/members/files/guides/learntofly.html) (limited to AOPA members).

#### AOPA's Online Communications Tool Kit





- **Take 'Em Flying** encourages pilots to share their love of flying by providing a firsthand flying experience to people unfamiliar with general aviation. It gives you ideas on how to plan an appropriate flight in a general aviation aircraft to help local reporters, elected officials, and others overcome misconceptions about general aviation. See [www.aopa.org/info/take-em-flying.pdf](http://www.aopa.org/info/take-em-flying.pdf).

- **How to Have a Successful Media Event** is a concise brochure that includes facts about GA, ideas for involving reporters, and strategies for successful events promoting your local GA airport. See [www.aopa.org/info/event.html](http://www.aopa.org/info/event.html).
- AOPA's Complete Guide to Holding an Airport Open House offers step-by-step checklists and ideas for staging an open house that will help non-pilot neighbors appreciate the value of a convenient community GA airport. See [www.aopa.org/asn/open\\_house.pdf](http://www.aopa.org/asn/open_house.pdf).

## Developing an Action Strategy

### What should you do now to protect your airport from encroachment?

- Form an airport support group.
- Define your airport.
- Know the schedule for planning decisions in your community.
- Identify key decision makers and educate them about aviation issues.
- Build relationships in your community.

## Airport Land Use Compatibility Airport Action Checklist



- Do you . . .**
  - . . . have airport background information available for elected officials, planners and community members?
  - . . . have a copy of the current comprehensive plan and zoning code?
  - . . . know what amendments are needed to the comprehensive plan and zoning code?
  - . . . know the schedule for comprehensive plan updates?
  
- Does the comprehensive plan . . .**
  - . . . include policies to discourage incompatible land development adjacent to the airport?
  - . . . recognize the airport as an Essential Public Facility?
  - . . . provide an inventory of airport operations and facilities, both existing and planned?
  - . . . include maps that identify an airport influence area?
  
- Does the zoning code . . .**
  - . . . prohibit penetration of the Part 77 *Imaginary Surfaces*?
  - . . . prohibit residential development or limit residential density adjacent to the airport?
  - . . . require that property owners be notified of noise, vibration and other effects associated with proximity to the airport?
  - . . . prohibit land uses that attract wildlife or create smoke, dust and vapors that extend into airspace?

