



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUSINESS ACTION CENTER
P.O. Box 820
Trenton, NJ 08625

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA WAY
Secretary of State

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

TO: State Planning Commission

FROM: Richard Brown, Office for Planning Advocacy and Colleen McGurk, formally of the Office for Planning Advocacy

RE: Eagles Nest Airport Transportation Node recommendation

DATE: May 7, 2019

The Office for Planning Advocacy recommends a map change to include a heavy-industrial- transportation-utility node in Eagleswood Township at the Eagles Nest Airport and some adjacent properties. The map amendment would result in the creation of a transportation node on approximately 107 acres of which 81 acres are owned by the airport. The 26 acres not owned by the airport within the proposed Node include a closed municipal landfill, a municipal public works building and yard, and an environmental service company.

The proposed node is consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan goals, specifically:

Goal # 3 To promote beneficial economic growth –

The airport is an existing business that serves the community and region by providing tax ratables, economic output and providing jobs both direct and indirect. According to a 2015 New Jersey Statewide Airport Economic Impact Study prepared for the New Jersey Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics, Eagles Nest Airport has a payroll of over \$5 million for employees working at the site and generates a total output into the regional economy of \$18 million. The report was by AECOM Technical Services, Inc.

Goal # 5 Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost –

The existing airport provides general aviation flight services infrastructure that is open to the public. As New Jersey has lost many small private airports over the years, diminishing transport alternatives, NJ DOT would like to retain the existing airports to ensure the continuation of the public services that this airport provides, especially in times of emergency.

Goal # 7 Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value –

The airport provides recreational value to the region by providing services for private pilots, skydiving and sightseeing tours.

Public Comments: The following are concerns raised by the public. There were approximately 26 people that attended the meeting in Eagleswood Township on June 28, 2017. There were many concerns that were repeated by different residents so OPA compiled them into different categories, however, several of these concerns were repeated by multiple commenters.

- The property has been cleared of forested areas (according to DEP approximately 13 acres of woods) which has caused soil erosion and increased stormwater runoff and the lack of wooded area has reduced the environmental attributes of the property. Also there is an underground stream and above ground stream which is drying up.
- The airport hurts property values and does not create a benefit to the local economy.
- The airport is a safety hazard, two flights recently crashed at the site. The airport does not serve local residents in Eagleswood.
- The applicant does not follow through on promises made to the township, its residents or the local fire department. Members of the public stated that the owner promised to supply materials to the local fire department in case of emergencies caused by the airport and the planes that utilize it. The resident stated that this was a part of a prior township Planning Board resolution.
- A representative from Save Barnegat Bay stated that they do not support this transportation node because it will increase the allowable impervious coverage and expressed concerns regarding the existing wetlands and the endangered pine snake.
- Any economic benefit that can be achieved is outweighed by the detriments to safety, the environment and reduction in property values. The resident requested that a study be performed (fiscal impact statement) to show how this airport will improve the local and regional economy. The resident was also concerned about the environmental impacts caused by unleaded gas contaminants in the air, soil and water. Residents in the area utilize well water and was concerned that the water could become contaminated by the unleaded gas.

The concerns raised about the extent of impervious cover, forest clearing, stormwater runoff, and endangered species habitat raised will need to be addressed by the airport facility in a CAFRA permit submission to be made by the applicant. The need for the CAFRA permit arises because, as acknowledged by the airport owner, previously conducted construction and paving, though municipally approved, required a CAFRA permit.

Also, it should be noted that DEP determined that suitable Pine Snake habitat on the airport site is not an issue due to the existing development at the airport. It was determined that it was probable that the suitable pine snake habitat is located to the north of this property, on the adjacent site owned by an ongoing gravel mining operation.

