

Bad Federal Bill

To The Editor:

Just when we recently said "au revoir" to the Concorde, we have another airport dilemma to deal with.

The Federal Department of Transportation wants to enact a bill that gives them ultimate authority over construction at the airports without consideration to protecting communities, the environment and public health.

Under this piece of legislation, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) does not need to conduct any type of studies at their discretion. At our expense, all laws and opportunities for hearings will be thrown out the window!

In an effort to accelerate airport expansions around the country, some in Congress are all too willing to sacrifice the public's voice in this process and the consideration of environmental and public health impacts.

Rather than seeking efficiency through better cooperation and coordination, the FAA conference report seeks speed by reducing who is included in the decision.

This report shuts out other federal and state agencies with valuable expertise, weakens or eliminates essential checks and balances, and disenfranchises affected communities.

The role of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the study and design of airport expansions could be dramatically curtailed. The U.S. EPA brings vital expertise to bear in the analysis of air pollution and public health impacts.

The language also could trump existing environmental and public health protections. For example, regulations governing wetlands permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act require the Corps of Engineers to evaluate "fish and wildlife values," "water quality," "conservation" and "aesthetics" and other factors in determining whether a permit serves the public interest.

The Corps has an affirmative duty to avoid "unnecessary alteration or destruction" of wetlands. Nothing requires the FAA to take these factors into consideration and the conference report language could relieve the Corps of its existing obligation to do so.

Language giving the FAA complete authority to determine the range of reasonable alternatives, especially combined with the phrase "notwithstanding other provisions of law," arguably overrides the substantive standard that protect parks and other cherished resources.

For more information, contact Sharon Buccino, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council, 202-289-6868, sbuccino@nrdc.org, Or Greg Smith, Transportation Analyst, Friends of the Earth, 202-783-7400 x 198, gsmith@foe.org.

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Tired Rerun

To The Editor:

Makes you want to cry, seeing a rerun of the Joe McCarthy intimidation of the media.

The Right Wing at that time had the media shaking in their boots, should they even consider airing any views that may throw so much as a shadow on the agenda of these self styled "Patriots". We now have that Right Wing mentality once again on the rampage.

CBS has just caved to the pressure put upon them by our current strain of the same virus, for considering the release of a TV film about their designated icon, Ronald Reagan.

There is not a US President since the advent of that living room, picture in a box, that has not had his life or a portion of it, good and bad, both biased, on that screen.

One would think Reagan, just as the rest, had a bit of both. Then why are they so afraid of his receiving the same lack of reverence as all the rest?

**Nicholas Zizelis
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