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Letters to the Editor

T.F. Green extension is crucial and needs everyone's support

To the Editor:

We finally have seen the beginning of the long overdue movement to grow T.F. Green Airport (PVD) in Warwick.

There are very strong arguments that support the proposal to extend a runway to 9,350 feet. A weaker alternative would be the newly proposed 8,700 feet. The choice can make the difference in airline service decisions and aircraft types that can use the airport. This translates into volume of use, route options, and ultimately the economic health of the airport, the surrounding area and the Providence metropolitan area.

Providence has become a viable alternative to Boston as a major city gateway to southeastern New England. Taking the bold step and moving forward with the 9,350-foot extension in tandem with the Intermodal Station's rail connection to Providence and bus service to the city is vital to the airport's ability to move people to their destinations.

But that expansion is not happening in a vacuum. At the same time as travel capacity expands, Providence is raising its national and international profile and growing as a national destination. And that growth requires a national approach to air travel. Coast-to-coast access and international flights are part of that major destination requirement.

Taken in their entirety, it is clear that these steps to improve the transportation infrastructure serve the economic interests of both the immediate area and across the state. For that reason, there is no alternative to expanding T.F. Green Airport. To act in a compromising or timid way would be to forfeit a great and historic economic opportunity.

Of course, there are efforts in Warwick to limit growth of the airport. [But] residents living in the flight path and city officials never should have been under any illusions. The airport serves New England's second-largest city and metropolitan area. It has been woefully undersized and still is.

Warwick should embrace its role as a transportation center and be a partner in ensuring adequate space for a robust air transportation facility. The obstruction must end.

Every effort must be taken to ensure that there is no economic loss incurred by these homeowners. But in the end, the FAA and the R.I. Airport Corporation should receive the full support of the political leadership of Providence, the state, the business community, and all those committed to developing a major airport for the Providence metropolitan area.

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