

A New Airport?

Confidential Instructions for the Senator from Faraway County (Democrat)

You were elected a year ago after the former long-serving senator retired. Previously you were the founder and director of the Faraway Planning and Development Institute, a non-profit think tank and community activist organization which has argued for a major increase in state support for cultural, economic, and social service development in Faraway County.

In principle, you favor the construction of a new airport for Ames, as it clearly makes economic sense for the state. However, an equally important principle is that the overall plan must balance benefits to eastern Ames with benefits for the citizens of less developed parts of the state, especially in the northwest. A new airport in or near Eastport, some 100 miles from Faraway County, will benefit Faraway and the northwest only if passengers and goods departing or arriving at the new airport can travel speedily to and from Faraway. The existing auto route from Eastport to Faraway County doesn't meet this standard, as it is mostly two lanes, and winds through several towns along the way. Additionally, there hasn't been an active rail link to the northwest of the state for almost 100 years. Independent of an airport, this lack of access has severely limited development in the northwest. Accordingly, you plan to push hard for high-speed access between any new airport and Faraway County as a condition of your support, with a strong preference for both highway *and* rail access, as economists suggest there is a synergistic benefit to having both available. Obviously this access would also benefit the other counties (not represented on the Committee) crossed on the way to Faraway.

To take full advantage of improved access, and even existing opportunities, Faraway County desperately needs some kind of public transit system. Today there is no rail or bus transportation at all within Faraway County, and several studies have documented the significant impact of this on many families. Surprisingly, it was found that 60% of Faraway families have access to only one car, and 6% lack even that. (In comparison, for the rest of Ames excluding urban centers, those numbers are 30% and 3%, respectively.) Especially in a rural area, this limits the ability of multiple family members to have jobs, and restricts where they can look for work.

The Legislative Research Service, at your request, did an analysis which found that with an initial investment of \$20 million and an annual subsidy of only \$10 million, the County could buy 100 minivans,

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hire drivers, and set up a system that offered basic transit coverage for the whole County. The LRS also estimated that this investment would pay for itself at least three times over within five years in terms of increased per capita income in the county and correspondingly reduced need for (state-subsidized) county services. Given that analysis, you will push as hard as you can on a commitment from the state for this funding.

You will also support the requests of Serenity and Pancake Counties for public transit assistance. Indeed, if three or more counties wanted to implement the Faraway County approach, they could probably achieve a volume discount of at least 10%, if not more. Alternatively, if there is a need to limit costs, this could be a pilot project, limited to Faraway County, aimed at determining the feasibility of the concept and its impact on per capita income in the area served.

Faraway County also has other important needs not directly related to a new airport, but that you believe should be addressed if you are to support such a major expenditure of state funds. A top priority for Faraway County is better health care. You desperately need more support for community clinics to help with maternity care, pediatrics, preventive services, cancer screening, mental health support, and especially addiction. More than half of Faraway County residents struggle to pay for basic health care, and the county lacks the funds to provide sufficient clinics, staff, and subsidies to provide that care. Faraway needs a one-time capital infusion of \$50 million, plus an additional \$25 million in annual support, to fund three additional clinics, in addition to the one clinic currently in operation. While Faraway County health care has been insufficient for decades, the opioid epidemic has pushed the system into crisis mode. So in addition, you need \$10 million annually to institute a program of opioid addiction prevention and treatment. (You also support the requests of Serenity and Pancake Counties for assistance in meeting their medical needs, albeit constrained by cost limitations.)

As far as the proposals contained in SB 101, including those that direct the ATA to study various options, you support nearly all of them to the extent they can all be funded within the annual \$500 million budget surplus. Most deal with increasing access to the new airport, and maximum access is consistent with serving the citizens of Ames and insuring a profitable airport. The access proposal that is most likely to be subject to attack on budgetary grounds is Emerald's request for a tunnel under the Ames River. The \$500 million cost of such a tunnel is higher than any other transportation expenditure, and even without the tunnel the residents of Emerald County will have high-speed road and rail access to the new airport. You will support the tunnel proposal if it does not create a budget deficit; otherwise you will have to oppose it, hoping that the Senator from Emerald County will realize that even without the tunnel, Emerald's interests will be better served by a new airport with easy access from Emerald County than by continuing to rely on Curly.

The only financial proposal in the bill that is not for airport access relates to redeveloping Curly, and you oppose that (unless it is necessary to obtain a 5-person majority for the airport). Tidal Flats has profited greatly over the years from the presence of Curly, and it should not be necessary for residents of other counties to pay for the costs associated with redeveloping Curly.

On the remaining issues, you don't care a lot about where the state sites a new biotech research

center, but on principle you like the idea of putting it in Emerald City, just because it's not Tidal Flats, which you think is overreaching in seeking compensation for losing Curly. You will ultimately support the choice which will most increase the likelihood of obtaining a 5-person Committee majority for the new airport.

Summary of Your Priorities

In sum, your primary interest is in having the new airport built with adequate road and rail access to and from Faraway County. Other issues that are important to you are funding for the health care so desperately needed by many of your constituents, as well as funding for your inventive, low-cost minivan public transit system.

In considering whether to vote for any proposed agreement for a new airport, you will have to decide whether that agreement, considered as a whole, contains provisions which would satisfy your constituents' interests more than would the "no deal" alternative.