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New York Airways Collection - "The Issues and Challenges of Air Transportation: A Symposium in the Public Interest...", 1961

Extracted on Mar-29-2024 08:51:57

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AIRPORT DESIGNS FOR THE JET AGE
by Francis T. Fox, General Manager
Los Angeles Department of Airports

The major break-through in solving the problems besetting jet age aviation will not be made in airport design, but in the design of the air-machine.

Noise is probably the number one problem at major airports today. Yet it is not truly an "Airport problem" - it is a problem of the airplane and its engines.

Access to airports is another so-called "airport problem" - yet the solution lies far from the airport, both geographically and politically. Terminal air traffic control is another critical area which is often erroneously labeled an "airport problem" while actually it is strictly an FAA responsibility.

These examples do not mean that no improvements can be made in airport design. They merely point up the fact that airport planning and design reach far above the concept of a landing field. Unless we are saprophytic we should realize that dynamic new ideas must be integrated into all phases of aviation and transportation if airports are to serve their proper function.

Airport design may be divided into two general areas: airfield design and air terminal design.

Airfield design involves such things as length, width, strength, and direction of runways and taxiways. Little knowledge can be contributed here. Runways for supersonics should have wheel loading capacities for 400,000 pounds, will be at least 150 feet wide, somewhere around 12,000 feet long, and should be headed generally into the wind and away from residential areas.

In my opinion, good airport master planning will eventually involve zoning such as is necessary in good community planning. There should be "clear zones" for over-run and under-run of runways as the Doolittle Report recommended. There should be "noise zoning" to prevent incompatible building within a measurable distance of runways. This could forbid residences, yet encourage industry which is generally air-conditioned and immune to aircraft noise. It must be realized that a 250,000 - pound airplane can't tiptoe in and out of an airport. Then there should be "sky-zoning" on the approaches to busy terminal airports. This would prevent the dangerous co-mingling of incompatible aircraft and airmen. Light airplanes and lightly-qualified pilots (non-instrument rated) should not jeopardize the orderly flow of heavy passenger-carrying aircraft at traffic saturation periods.

The principle of "commune bonum" (the greatest good for the greatest number) must prevail. If these light planes and their pilots are ruled off busy terminal airports, the community should provide other adequate landing areas for their use.

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