

131st MAINE LEGISLATURE, 2nd Regular Session

**THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INNOVATION, DEVELOPMENT,
ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT, AND BUSINESS**

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**TESTIMONY OPPOSING LD 1998: An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the
Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

My name is Patrick Sharrow. I am a senior Aviation Planner with Dubois & King conducting the Loring Airport Master Plan for the Loring Development Authority. We have been charged with identifying the critical facility needs of the airport based on the strict designed standards defined by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

I am offering testimony today in opposition to LD 1998, An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum.

Due to technical difficulties, I was not able to testify over the Zoom meeting today. Although I was able to hear the testimony of others, I was unable to verbally connect via the online link. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify a few questions that came up during the meeting:

What is the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and why is it important:

- The NPIAS is an integrated system of public-use airports in the United States that the FAA has deemed critical to the national transportation system, a productive national economy, and international competitiveness.
- The NPIAS identifies existing and proposed public-use airports that are considered significant to national air transportation and thus are eligible to receive federal grants.

With the evolving development of the aerospace industry:

- Advancing capabilities of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), which links rural airports to industrial centers and brings opportunities for these areas to cater to niche markets that over stressed populated areas are unable to serve.

- Regional Maintenance Repair and Overhaul companies that focus on large aircraft require infrastructure (equivalent in size to the arch hangar) to support such operations. This infrastructure is unique to Loring and is a significant asset.
- The US airport infrastructure is experiencing growth at a time of re-organization and adaptation to evolved operational requirements. Loring is poised to take advantage of this opportunity to cater to a variety of markets including commercial space, and benefit the community through economic benefits and educational STEAM programs.

The Loring Air Force Base has played a critical role in US history. Since its closure, the Loring International Airport (ME16) has been considered a private-use airport and is not recognized by the FAA as a NPIAS airport. It is the goal of the Loring Development Authority (LDA) to become Public use and included in the NPIAS.

Without NPIAS designation, the LDA sought and secured funding for the development of the Airport Master Plan, funded through the Department of Defense (DOD) grant. A key goal of this study is to utilize the existing airfield facilities to support aerospace operations into the future. The existing extensive infrastructure that Loring offers is unmatched by few airports on the East Coast.

With the inclusion of Loring into the NPIAS, the State of Maine as well as the East Coast will be in a position to support niche markets that complement the MaineDOT state airport system plan as well as the national airport system.

An Airport Master Plan is a comprehensive study of an airport that describes short-, medium-, and long-term development plans to meet future aviation demand.

Since assuming management and operation of the Loring Commerce Center, the LDA has worked hard to promote and plan for airside as well as landside development while redeveloping the site for economic and innovation opportunities.

Some of these operations include:

- Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility for the New England Region,
- Development as a hub for advancing unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), urban aerial mobility,
- Commercial space technologies - Horizontal Space Launch and Recovery operations.

During the Master Planning process, the Airport boundary is designated and any land inside this boundary is designated for aeronautical use only. Having the arch hangar used for non-aeronautical purposes would exclude it from Airport property, would result in the hangar not

being eligible for FAA federal funding, and greatly impede the current and future aeronautical development of the airport.

Timeline for recent and future development of Loring:

On May 17, 2017, FAA New England Region Airports District (ADO) Office Manager Mary Walsh and MaineDOT Aeronautics laid out a very specific written plan to follow regarding the integration of Loring into the NPIAS and numerous follow-on meetings were held with MaineDOT, FAA, and Loring to this regard. Ms. Walsh recommended that with the potential for economic development and hundreds of new jobs, Loring should compose a compelling request, "to be delivered to the FAA in Washington, DC, at a joint meeting with the Congressional delegation."

June 19, 2017 - Ms. Walsh described similar efforts for NPIAS integration and recommended:

- Pavement Condition Index (PCI) Analysis
- An Airport Master Plan

2019 - Loring was included in the MaineDOT-funded PCI study.

2023 - Airport Master Plan to be completed in 2024

- Development support including MRO, cargo, UAS development, innovation and data analytics, and spaceport activities.

2024 - With acceptance from the FAA into NPIAS Loring will be eligible to receive federal funding from numerous sources (Non-Primary Entitlement, Discretionary, Congressionally Directed Spending, and Military Airport Program) and state funding (match and state apportionment).

The study, to date, leads our firm to believe that the Loring Airport shows a compelling case to be accepted into the NPIAS, subject to FAA approval. If the FAA does not accept the Loring Airport into the NPIAS, then Green 4 Maine has an agreement to acquire the property and the Airport may not become a public use airport. Privately owned airports are not eligible for federal funding through the FAA.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick Sharrow, AAE