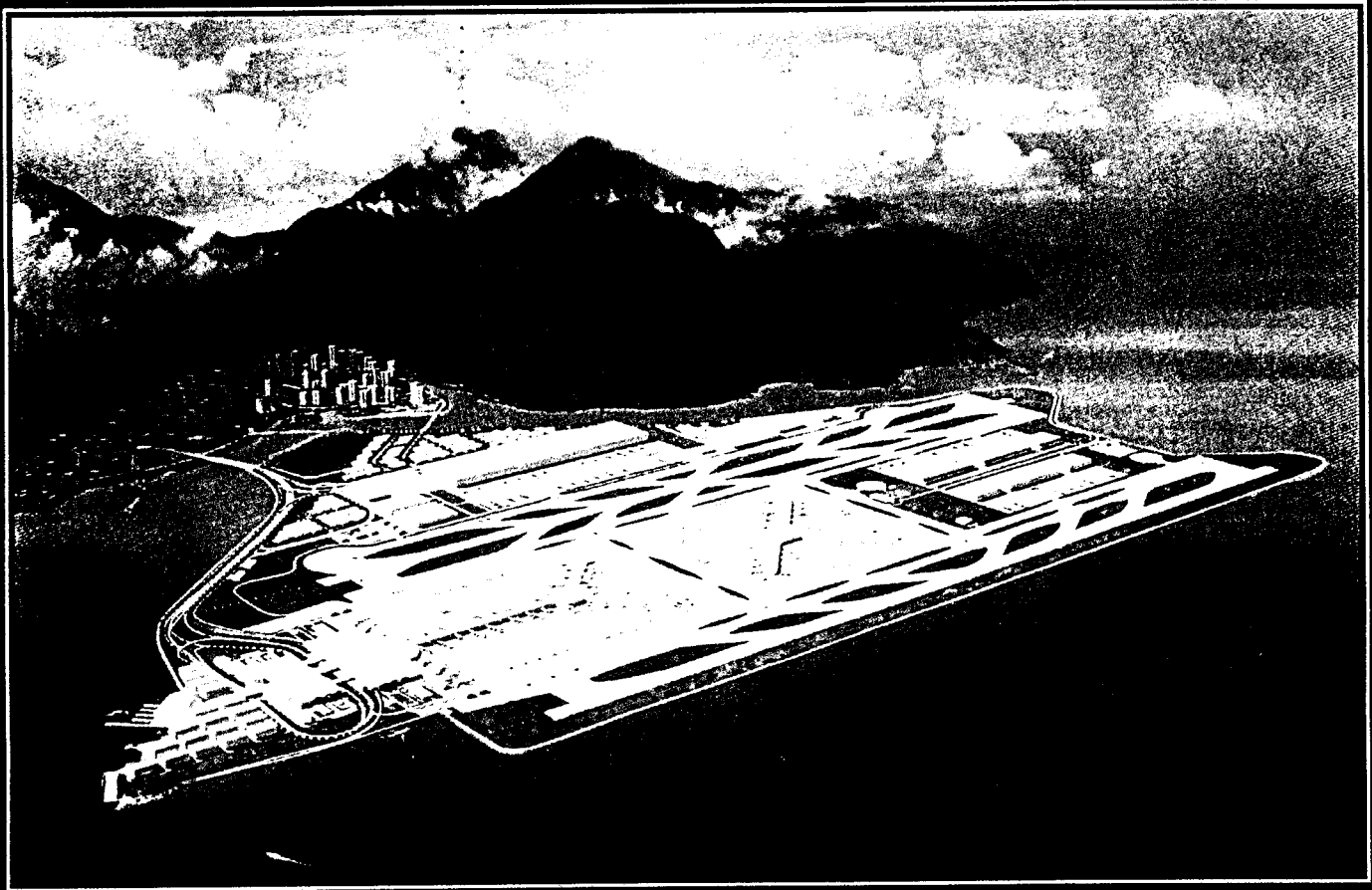


Airport Cities 21

The new global transport centers of the 21st century



by McKinley Conway

New FAA Wayport Proposal Could be Site Breakthrough Opening Opportunities for 21st Century Development

It's no secret that we're facing a crisis in airport development. This nation, which developed the world's finest system of fast and efficient air transport, has not added a major new airport in more than 10 years.

Basically, we have a site problem. In most metro areas, plans for new airports have been made and funds have been promised. Yet, construction has not started because of extended citizen opposition. Wherever we put an "X" on the metro map, neighborhood groups rise up to say, "Don't put it here."

The current site approval system is inherently self-defeating. Major airports involve collaboration between the FAA and local governments. The local authority has the last voice in site selection.

Many a fine airport project has been put on the shelf because local politicians were unwilling to face the reaction of a small group of vocal citizens. This has been the experience not only with large jetports but also with smaller, general-aviation reliever facilities.

These airport opposition groups have become increasingly blind and irrational. Some have mounted campaigns not only against new or expanded facilities but also against the addition of features needed to make existing airports safer for both those who fly and those who live around the facility.

Viewing this stalemated policy, some planners have suggested that the federal government will have to take over the entire process of airport site selection and construction. Given authority, the FAA could put airports where needed and ignore the uproar from the airports' neighbors. This approach might build airports, but it would leave many bruises and lacerations.

Now, our old friend Jim Sheppard, who heads up the FAA planning group in Orlando, has tossed out a new concept. Why not build new hub airports in remote rural areas where there is little or no opposition? These "wayports" would be located in each region to handle connecting flights — some 60 percent of the passenger load.

Sheppard points out that development of wayports would ease the pressure for airport expansion in metro areas, would minimize airspace congestion, and would reduce passenger delays. The system would require about six wayports to cover the continental United States. The wayport plan is hailed as being as significant to air travel as the interstate highway plan has been to auto travel.

We'll go a notch further. We believe the wayport scheme is

not only an intriguing airport plan; it also offers the opportunity for demonstrating a revolutionary concept of urban development.

The sites chosen for the wayports, however rural or undeveloped, will instantly become the sites for new towns. These new clusters, if unplanned, will soon look like many another boom town. Take a look at some of the new towns spawned by the interstate highway construction.

Properly planned, the new wayport towns can provide a long-awaited, full-scale demonstration of the airport city concept (see our book, *The Airport City*), which features a unimodal transport system. Once demonstrated, we believe this concept will provide the pattern for new urban centers for the 21st century.

Already, the wayport idea has fanned enthusiastic response. Local groups in various parts of the nation are putting forward sites and urging that their area be chosen. Congressional action may come swiftly.

This is exciting! Many corporate site selection projects are affected. We look for a thoroughgoing discussion of the concept and its implications at the next IDRC World Congress in San Francisco, Nov. 6-8.

— McKinley Conway



While the wayport concept discussed in this issue is being proposed for the U.S. airport system, it may have future implications for such travel centers as Sidney, seen here.

Airport Cities 21

*The new global transport centers
of the 21st century*

by McKinley Conway



40 Technology Park/Atlanta, Suite 200
Norcross, Ga. 30092-9934 USA
Tel: 1-404-446-6996 / Fax: 1-404-263-8825

For this discussion of airport cities we have chosen not to use the standard terminology (hubs, etc.) used by airport planners. We want to make it clear that planned airport cities are not the same as airports.

Five-star global airport cities

At the top of our list we have five-star airport cities, which will be in a class by themselves. They will be the key elements of the new global system.

These new airport cities will offer transoceanic service via 1,000-passenger jumbo jets, SSTs and TAVs. Mainly, they will serve to connect the three most important global regions — Pacific Rim, North America and Europe. This is where the global traffic is concentrated.

These sites will be close to the coast but with direct connections to major rapid rail and highway systems. The sites will be large — 22,000 acres (10,000 hectares) or more.

Economic analysis suggests that there may be two or three sites feasible in Europe, two or three in the Pacific Rim and two or three in the United States. The first 10 projects to be built may dominate the world air transport industry for decades.

Measured by present standards, these new airport cities will have virtually unlimited capacity. There will be few if any constraints on growth.

To begin with, the new cities will require sites several times as large as those that have been used for big airports. Further, they will require authority over surrounding land uses, which will raise big political questions.

A common denominator is that the new complexes will be very expensive. The risk to sponsors

will be enormous. A few bold projects will gain new global roles, while those that come late or compromise on criteria will be expensive failures.

The competition for world leadership has already begun. A number of groups are in various stages of planning and promoting new projects that could qualify as global airport cities.

Well before the year 2000 rolls around, some group somewhere will make the Big Commitment — allocating funds to build the first true global airport city. The project may emerge from a group of proposals for “wayports” now being promoted in the United States.

These new airport cities will merit listing in our file of “global super projects.” This is a data base of more than 1,300 large-scale projects of global significance, which we maintain for the World Development Council.

To begin with, the new cities will require sites several times as large as those that have been used for big airports. Further, they will require authority over surrounding land uses, which will raise big political questions.

The wayport idea

The “wayport” concept involves the separation of the transfer traffic from the destination traffic in congested areas. It appears to be a simple and common-sense approach.

For example, some two-thirds of the passengers going through Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport today are not destined for Atlanta. They are changing planes to go somewhere else. The same is true for the other major hubs, such as Chicago's O'Hare.

This means that the Atlanta airspace and Atlanta runways are occupied by traffic that could be relocated to a wayport many miles away — leaving Atlanta with abundant airspace and runway capacity for Atlanta-bound traffic for the foreseeable future.

Proponents want to build new wayports, or transfer points, outside the congested areas. They want sites where land is cheap, and the neighbors might welcome the new facility. A preliminary plan suggests that five new wayports strategically situated around the United States could relieve the pressure on some 25 key airports for a fraction of the cost of expanding or replacing them individually.

This idea has been promulgated for some years by Jim Sheppard, veteran FAA airport planner. The idea is so appealing that bills have been introduced in both the U.S. Senate and the House



Source: Precision Aerial Surveys. Photo: Willie Carter

Figure III-1. *Spruce Creek, near Daytona Beach, Fla., is the world's foremost residential airport community. Taxiways lead to the homes of several hundred aircraft owners and pilots.*

of Representatives to authorize planning. Immediate opposition has arisen, however, from those who fear loss of business.

The arguments we are hearing now are precisely the same as those we heard in the 1950s when the interstate highway system was proposed. Merchants in the towns to be by-passed raised a mighty howl. Opposition to the new airport plan comes from concessionaires in the old hub airports who would miss the traffic they now enjoy.

Despite the fact that some were hurt, the interstate highway system has brought enormous benefits to the great majority of our people. It has proven to be a wonderful investment.

The new airport city/wayport system may be the interstate highway system for the 21st century. It deserves a careful look.

Four-star international airport cities

This category includes airport cities that are vital to a global region, such as the Pacific Rim, Europe or North America. This includes a number of existing airports as well as new projects.

These airport cities typically provide international service as well as extensive service within the region. They play important roles in the economic life of their service areas.

These cities are mostly of the unplanned variety. They are hampered by limitations of airspace and site, as well as various noise, night operation and environmental restrictions.

Despite these obstacles, a number of these expanded and upgraded facilities will seek to compete for key roles in the new global system. In the near term, they may enjoy success, but their competitive position will deteriorate as new five-star facilities come into operation.

Three-star airport cities

Our next category of airport cities includes scores of facilities that provide scheduled jet service within significant areas. They are oriented primarily to domestic origins and destinations but offer international service via transfer at a four- or five-star facility.

Two-star airport cities

This category is involved primarily in providing commuter service to larger airport cities.

One-star airport cities

These are the facilities that generally provide

service via non-scheduled general aviation. They play a very important role in area development.

Within this category, there are several distinct groups. These include fly-in residential communities, fly-in resorts and fly-in frontier villages.

Some of these units already display the features of the ultimate airport community or city.

A range of components would be considered in planning such a small airport city or community. Like conventional communities, it is to be expected that fly-in communities will have varying mixes of components depending on their location, economic opportunities and markets served.

Certainly, it would be surprising to find many locations where all of the uses were economically attractive. It is much more likely that in many situations there will be communities having only three or four uses.

Residential and recreational developments are typically associated with smaller airstrips.

(We would expect large office and industrial parks to be associated with larger airports — three-star or four-star airport cities.)

Residential airport communities

Quite a few observers are willing to accept the proposition that there are some transportation benefits in an airport community. They remain skeptical, nevertheless, regarding the total community concept, which includes residential uses. They ask, "Why would anyone want to live at an airport?"

The pilot-aircraft owner might well respond, "Why would an auto owner want to live on a street?" What strikes the non-pilot as peculiar is a perfectly natural reaction for those who depend primarily on a small airplane to achieve mobility.

There is already evidence that living in a fly-in residential subdivision is an accepted lifestyle. Once a project is opened and families start enjoying the new pattern, enthusiasm is contagious.

Just how large the market for airport-oriented homesites may be is suggested by the fact that there are more than 700,000 active pilots in the United States, plus retired pilots, new student-pilots and other aviation personnel — which brings the total to well over one million.

It is very easy, therefore, to underestimate the market for a good fly-in development. For every pilot-owner in the area there are 10 adults and a hundred young people who want to fly! As soon as a family moves into an airport community, there's a jump in interest in taking flying lessons.