

## A regional approach to plan an airport

April 13, 2008

It is with great disappointment that we must point out that the Chicago Tribune has once again failed to recognize the regional approach Will County has taken to plan an airport to be built entirely within our borders.

Your April 3 editorial "Pick up the Peotone pace," regarding the proposed airport in Will County, misrepresents our approach to making the airport a reality.

Thousands of hours have been put into researching, reaching out and consensus building. In listening to and learning from our regional partners, we have come up with a plan endorsed by a coalition of business and labor leaders that includes the Will County Center for Economic Development, the Joliet Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Kankakee Chamber of Commerce, the Southland Chamber of Commerce and the Building Trades Councils from Cook, Will, Kankakee and Grundy Counties.

Your editorial states that Gov. Rod Blagojevich "submitted two plans to the [Federal Aviation Administration]: the Jackson group's innovative partnership and the more traditional one that would be operated by Will County."

The governor never submitted—nor does the FAA require—a plan for the governance of the airport.

The preferred airport layout plan the governor submitted outlines airport facilities, runway locations, access points and provisions for general aviation activities.

The governor and the Illinois Department of Transportation properly rejected the airport layout plans suggested by the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Coalition as being ill-advised from both an environmental perspective and from the impact on local communities. The plan the state submitted is a better plan from every perspective than any plan advanced by ALNAC.

On the separate question of governance, the Will County plan envisions an airport authority that includes representatives from Cook and Kankakee Counties. This authority would have all of the statutory powers necessary to enter into public-private partnerships through competitive bidding procedures to design, build and operate the airport. We are seeking General Assembly approval for such authority.

We join you in recognizing a need for a third airport to serve the Chicago region. We have seen the mistakes that were made by not including O'Hare International Airport neighbors in the governance of that airport. It has delayed many necessary projects and cost millions of taxpayer dollars in litigation and construction delays.

We are determined to build this airport in the right and responsible way, and we invite all who share this vision of an economic engine for everyone in the area to join us.

—Larry Walsh  
Will County Executive - Joliet