

Aviation board advances limited Aurora State Airport runway extension

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Jim Shotwell, a pilot with Aurora Aviation, prepares to take off for a flight from Aurora State Airport in April. Under a plan advanced Thursday by the Oregon Aviation Board, the airport's runway may someday be extended to allow heavier planes to take off.

The Oregon Aviation Board voted a takeoff-only runway extension into the **Aurora State Airport's future** Thursday, a proposal the Federal Aviation Administration has said it **won't support**.

Board members voted 6-0 to add the 800-foot north extension to the airport's master plan, said Mitch Swecker, acting director of the state's aviation department.

But the FAA has said it won't invest in a longer runway that doesn't accommodate both departures and arrivals. And traffic levels at the airport justify the longer extension.

In a sort of compromise, the board approved a default 1,000-foot south extension that would take effect only if the FAA denies the top choice, Swecker said. Opponents have criticized that option because it would close an agricultural road bounding the south edge of the airport.

"We needed to have something," he said. "We won't carry this out indefinitely."

Yesterday's vote is part of a multi-year effort to update the airport's master plan, which outlines growth for the next 25 years. The state hopes to finish the plan this year. Planners will eventually submit the board's two-part decision to the FAA for final approval.

The process became contentious in March, when **officials unveiled the runway options** to a crowd of more than 100 people. Since then, airport businesses and nearby residents have found little common ground.

The board considered both sides before making its final decision, Swecker said. "You know, you're not going to please everybody at some point in the process."