



REDEFINING BEST-IN-CLASS.



County airport to update its master plan

By **DANIEL OFFNER**

Officials with the county Department of Public Works and Transportation met with members of the public last month to solicit comments regarding the development of a new master plan for the Westchester County Airport in Purchase.

Last updated in 1987, the county airport's master plan serves as a description and analysis of the existing conditions of the facilities. By updating the plan, county officials hope to further enhance safety and efficiency for travelers and determine the potential for future improvements to the airport.

According to Donna Greene, a Westchester County spokesperson, the county hired DY Consulting Engineers to reexamine and update the plan while keeping consistent with current county law and policies.

"It's meant to take inventory, so we can forecast for the future," Greene said. "We need to look at everything."

Still in the early stages of the process, the update will also take into consideration feedback from residents and airport tenants for potential ways to improve upon the airport.

"All of that feedback is being compiled and analyzed," said Jay Pisco, county commissioner of Public Works. "The master plan will provide a guide to future investments airport, and is recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration."

Pisco added that law dictates strict limits on the number of commercial flights that can operate at the county airport and that the master plan is not going to change that.

Although the master plan update does not necessarily mean that there will be any development, the potential improvements have left many locals concerned over the possibility of expanding the airport facilities in the area.

"It doesn't need to be expanded," said Richard Rosenthal, a Katonah resident who works in the area. "Right now, they stack up these planes...they fly over my house so many times. Depending on the wind, you can hear them."

One of several key issues taken into consideration by the county and their consultants will be noise abatement, which has been the concern of many living in the Purchase area who have complaints of planes flying overhead.

In addition to the noise, the county public works department has taken environmental concerns into consideration. In the past, the Purchase Environmental Protective Association—a nonprofit organization that works to protect and preserve the environment in Purchase—has worked with the county by participating in airport advisory meetings supporting efforts to introduce environmental personnel and standards to guide airport operations.

"PEPA's position on the airport has been to oppose further expansion and thus, limit the airport's increased environmental impacts on drinking water quality, airport noise and air pollution," said PEPA Executive Director Anne Gold. "We will continue to monitor any proposed projects—including a master plan update—to ensure they will not require any expansion of the airport."

In 2004, the county airport was the third in the nation to become ISO 14001-certified for its airport environmental management system, which monitors the environmental performance of the facilities.

Despite concerns over whether or not the airport plans to expand, some have felt improvements are necessary to bring the county airport up-to-date with the 21st century.

"I do a lot of work with Westchester Airport and I think what troubles me the most is that I've found how inconvenient and complex the layout is," said Debbie Wecker, a Katonah resident. "I think it's completely inefficient...if anything is going to change, they should work on that."

With no plan on the table as of press time, the county and its consultants plan to continue their efforts to finalize a master plan in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration guidance.



The Westchester Airport is currently undergoing an update of its master plan—a guiding document mapping the existing facilities—with the hopes of enhancing safety and efficiency while mapping the potential for future improvements.

File photo

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About Daniel Offner

Daniel Offner joined Hometown Media Group as a staff reporter in 2012 after working as a freelancer and has since covered the Town/Village of Harrison and the villages of Bronxville and Larchmont. Offner holds a B.A. in journalism from SUNY Stony Brook and has previous experience as an intern for WSHU, an NPR affiliate in Fairfield, Conn. also an avid photographer, occasional blogger, and an amateur web designer who aspires to one day write for a national publication. Reach Dan at 914-653-1000 x26 or dan@hometwn.com; follow him on Twitter [@harrisonreport](https://twitter.com/harrisonreport).

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