

Report recommends more Bowman tree cutting



James Bruggers, @jbruggers

Study rejects lights on poles and doing nothing, instead recommending additional trimming and cutting.



(Photo: Courtesy Michael Hayman)

A long-awaited environmental study recommends additional tree cutting in areas next to Bowman Field as the best way to clear airspace for planes that use the general aviation airport.

The study prepared for the Louisville Regional Airport Authority finds no significant environmental, cultural or historical consequences of removing or trimming more than 100 additional trees.

Any concerns about birds or other wildlife that live in the trees or use them were dismissed with a conclusion that they could find suitable habitat nearby. And a related review by the Federal Aviation Administration concludes that trees are not contributing to the historical

resources of the area. The authority has posted the study, a letter to airport neighbors and a map showing the locations of planned tree actions on its website, <http://bit.ly/1RT4zTP>.

An alternative of using lights on poles next to trees that are too tall would be more disruptive, the study by Hanson Professional Services concludes. And doing nothing would require shortening runways by hundreds of feet, resulting in requirements that would ban certain types of aircraft already using the airport, Hanson found.

"The study pretty much speaks for itself," said Charles T. "Skip" Miller, executive director of the airport authority. "We are very gratified that (Federal Aviation Administration) has moved this process along much more smartly than in the past."

a The Courier-Journal on [May 2 reported](#) on a conflict between the FAA and the airport
a authority over the pace of environmental and historical reviews. The authority said it was
r prepared to forego \$2 million in federal money to help pay for tree or limb removal to meet
r a current schedule, and FAA officials said if the authority failed to finish the environmental
r reviews it would need to reimburse the federal agency up to \$1 million in grant money
already awarded.

Miller said the authority and FAA are on schedule now for the authority to seek the federal grant money

The authority has scheduled a June 28 public meeting to answer questions and receive comments, and already some airport neighbors who have fought to make sure the authority follows environmental rules are urging a strong turn-out.

FAA is also accepting written comments through 4 p.m. June 29 to Aaron.Braswell@faa.gov.

The authority first told the public it needed to buy more airspace easements and trim or remove more trees in late 2011. In a May 31 letter to airport neighbors, the authority said it removed 107 trees and trimmed 13 more last winter – it's [most recent work](#) to clear airspace it already controls.

A posting on the [Plea for Trees group](#) claims that more than 300 mature trees will have been removed by the authority when its so-called safety program is completed, and it objects the authority's mitigation plan.



Bowman Field, circa 1930, not long after construction (Photo: LRAA via Goodman-Paxton Collection, Kentucky Digital Library. University of Kentucky)

"Their mitigation proposal is woefully inadequate to compensate property owners and the entire community from the loss of these significant trees," the group wrote. "LRAA should do more plantings in Seneca Park, along Pee Weese Road, and along Cannons Lane."

Miller said the authority offers a two-for-one replacement of any trees removed, but the new trees are not supposed to grow into airspace easements that the authority already owns or will purchase as part of its program.

Leslie Barras, an environmental attorney working with Plea for Trees, said it appears the environmental study reached wrong conclusions.

"FAA and LRAA have incorrectly concluded that their removal of a substantial number of mature trees in the Bowman Field neighborhoods and Seneca Park will not harm the community's enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape, or the environment or wildlife that relies upon these trees," she said. "They have also incorrectly concluded that acquiring navigation easements, either voluntarily or through condemnation, which are unlimited airspace rights over individual homeowners' properties, will not harm property values or enjoyment of individual homes."

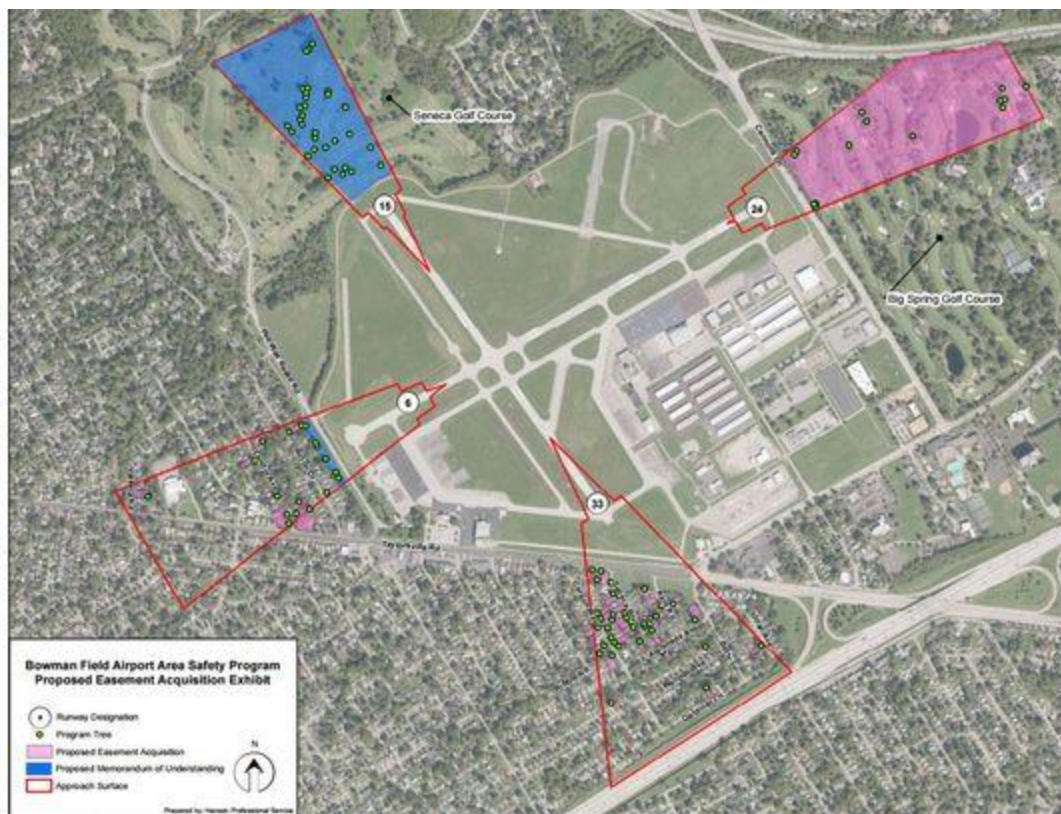
She said that people don't have to live in this area to be "rightfully concerned about the further loss of mature tree canopy in Louisville – it's a loss to the community as a whole and should be mitigated more fully than LRAA and FAA propose to do. All interested individuals need to respond to this incorrect environmental document at the June 28 hearing."

Miller said the meeting will be "workshop style," with various stations set up for people to ask questions and provide their comments. Some have criticized that style in the past because it's hard for people to listen to what others have to say.

Reach reporter James Bruggers at (502) 582-4645 and at jbruggers@courier-journal.com.

How to comment:

- Attend public meeting 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. June 28, Breckinridge Inn, 2800 Breckinridge Lane.
- Send written comments to FAA by 4 p.m. June 29, to Aaron.Braswell@faa.gov or to FAA, 2600 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Ste. 2250, Memphis, TN 38118.
- Find study and communication with airport neighbors at Louisville Regional Airport Authority website, <http://bit.ly/1RT4zTP>.



Little green dots show where tree cutting is proposed. Pink shaded areas show where airspace easements are to be bought. Blue shading shows area for a proposed memorandum of understanding. (Photo: LRAA)