

Back and Forth on Tweed

There has been a healthy debate between NHCAN and the city administration about the present and future of Tweed. Here are the key points summarized. Please contact your alderperson with your views about Tweed before the 2/17 BoA meeting.

NHCAN's Initial Point	City's Response	NHCAN's Rebuttal
<p>The citizens of New Haven receive no measurable benefit from Tweed. It is a regional asset that should be paid for by the region or the state.</p>	<p>The subsidy to Tweed is offset by the PILOT (\$.6M in FY08-09).</p>	<p>The PILOT payment reimburses New Haven for the loss of property taxes on Tweed. The subsidy is an additional cost we shouldn't have to bear alone.</p>
<p>The Tweed authority is not transparent in its financial management.</p>	<p>Tweed is absolutely transparent. We have met with the Citizen's Budget Committee (NHCAN attended) for over two hours and invited members to meet directly with staff at airport.</p>	<p>Transparency means keeping your books open to public inquiry. Tweed's books are not open. Staffing level details and salaries for Tweed employees and are not available to the public.</p>
<p>Tweed staffing is significantly higher than at other small airports around the state. There is clear opportunity for cost-cutting.</p>	<p>Commercial service comes with a higher staffing level to address TSA requirements, customer services, maintenance of a terminal, etc. The small GA airports do not have these requirements, plus the on-airport personnel are backed up by the State for administrative work.</p>	<p>Oxford-Waterbury is maintained to TSA standards by five people. Tweed has between 16 and 20 employees, possibly more. State support can't replace more than five FTEs.</p>
<p>State funding for Tweed is steadily decreasing. The Tweed authority has to learn how to live with a smaller subsidy now, as New Haven cannot make up the difference.</p>	<p>Tweed is aggressively focused on a lower cost program for FY09-10, but will still need a significant operating subsidy.</p>	<p>Despite attrition of 4 FTEs, Tweed personnel costs have remained flat at more than \$1.1M. Where is the aggressive focus on lowering costs?</p>
<p>The airport has many general aviation fees which could be raised by small increments to generate the revenue needed from the airport's main users.</p>	<p>Fees were raised once this year and the Finance/Audit Committee tasked Tweed to prepare a second fee increase (except for USAir). New fees, however, will not effect this fiscal year in a measurable way.</p>	<p>The landing fees were raised by 50 cents. The lowest rung fee is \$2.50. The same plane landing at Waterbury pays \$8. The fuel flowage fee wasn't raised. Simply raising that fee by \$0.05 per gallon would generate more than \$28K. A third of the fiscal year remains.</p>
<p>Tweed must cut costs and reduce the need for city subsidy.</p>	<p>If Tweed fails, the Airport once again will be a city department, placing stress on many other programs (\$2.0M).</p>	<p>No one wants the airport to fail. But there are clear opportunities for greater efficiency and a better balance between revenue and expense. The Authority is not taking those opportunities because city officials will not push back.</p>
<p>New Haven should not be bearing the overwhelming share of the burden. The city's money should be going to Early Reading Success programs and homeless shelters, not airports.</p>	<p>Agreed. Tweed continues to push the "Time is Now" plan for this very reason.</p>	<p>The city has provided no evidence of a lobbying effort to get Tweed off of New Haven's books, whether via state ownership or true regional support. Simply saying that there's a plan doesn't make it so. We need evidence of action.</p>