

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC.
NEW YORK MUNICIPAL AIRPORT
JACKSON HEIGHTS, L. I.
NEW YORK CITY

August 5, 1941

Mr. Amon G. Carter
Fort Worth Club
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Amon:

Since we talked last in New York about an airport proposed to be located between Fort Worth and Dallas, I have endeavored to gather all data which I could secure on the subject. I have had several meetings with our airport people, our engineers and our operating department, and we have had some discussions with people in Washington who are informed on and interested in the subject.

The present construction and performance of military bombers will give us some indication of the trend for the future which will be reflected in commercial aircraft which we will be operating in the reasonably near years, years for which we must provide when we plan our airport requirements.

Consolidated B-24 bombers are now taking off with gross loads of from 55,000 to 57,000 pounds which is equivalent to 55-57 pounds wing loading, as compared with wing loading on our presently operated commercial aircraft of well below 40 pounds.

It seems certain that the airlines will be operating within five years with airplanes which will weigh from 50,000 to 75,000 pounds with wing loadings of at least 50 pounds. It is not anticipated, of course, that all operations will be conducted with aircraft of that size, but certainly the through, transcontinental flights will be operated with aircraft of substantially those sizes, and the transcontinental operation is one which we must take into consideration when we are thinking of our requirements for airports in the Southwest section.

In the operation of aircraft of that type there are several requirements to which we must give consideration in making recommendations for the construction of an airport: one, runway length to permit safety in landings and takeoffs; second, runway strength to properly bear the weight of heavier airplanes; and, third, reasonable freedom from obstructions around the airport to permit reasonable access to the airport and safety of operation.

Mr. Amon G. Carter

In the operation of present military aircraft of the heavier types runways of 7,000 feet in length are preferred and reasonably required and a great many of the military fields now under construction are to be equipped with runways of that length. Not only is this a present requirement for the larger military airports, but you know of the trend toward longer runways for civil air fields through your knowledge of construction now going on at such places as Washington, Memphis, Chicago, Tucson, Los Angeles and many other cities.

With respect to runway strength, concrete runways are preferred, when soil conditions will permit, and most of the military runways of longer length are of that construction.

Another very definite factor to which consideration must be given in determining our runway requirements for the future is the perfection and utilization of blind landing systems which will permit operation and landings under weather conditions much lower than is at present possible. Blind landing systems have been used very extensively on a test and experimental basis in this country for many years and these systems are approaching the point of perfection where they can soon be utilized in air transport operation. Blind landing systems are now being utilized very extensively in Germany, France and England in the operation of military aircraft and reports received concerning their operation would lead us to believe that they will soon be feasible for air transport operation.

The effective use of blind landing systems requires reasonable freedom from obstructions in the line of airport approach, reasonably large areas in the airport itself and, which is very important, long and unobstructed landing areas or runways.

At the present time we have only two airports in the Fort Worth-Dallas area to which consideration can be given when we endeavor to forecast our airport requirements for the future, those two airports being the municipal airport at Fort Worth and the municipal airport at Dallas.

It is a very reasonable question to ask, "Can the Dallas Airport be made sufficient in area and in runway lengths for the requirements of the future?", and that is a question I have asked several times of our airport and operating people. We concede, of course, that nearly nothing is entirely impossible, but upon a reasonable basis it is very doubtful that the Dallas Airport can be made suitable, either for the operation of larger aircraft of the future or for blind landing of any type of transport aircraft.

Mr. Amon G. Carter

The area around the Dallas airport is even now reasonably well developed, the airport being hedged in by streets, residences, industrial buildings and high tension lines. The cost of securing runways approximately 7,000 feet long, or even 6,000 feet, reasonably well unobstructed, in the area of the present airport, would be exceedingly high and might be beyond the financial capacity, or the reasonable willingness, of the City of Dallas to accomplish.

The situation at the Fort Worth airport is in some respects less difficult, but in other respects it would be more difficult than at Dallas. A substantial enlargement of the present Fort Worth airport would require a very substantial job of earth removal and fill and even if that be undertaken the airport is hedged in on at least two sides by a road and by a railroad track, and the opportunity of extending the airport in directions other than those two is not unlimited.

There are obstructions around the Fort Worth airport which could not be reasonably removed, such as a grain elevator, the cement plant and others.

Expensive as it might be to enlarge the present Dallas airport to the size and requirements of the future, it would in all probability be even more expensive to accomplish the same requirements at the present Fort Worth airport location.

It seems to me, after having studied this matter for a long time, that it "boils down" very logically to these conclusions:

1. We will reasonably require, if we are to operate more modern airplanes and if Fort Worth and Dallas are to be served by those airplanes, an airport in the Fort Worth-Dallas area of greater size with substantially greater runway length and with better freedom from obstructions than is now available at either Fort Worth or at Dallas. In the discussion of our requirements not only must consideration be given to the potentiality of operation of larger aircraft, but also the potentiality of our use of blind landing facilities must be taken into consideration.
2. The expense of constructing an airport of the requirements which we may anticipate in the future will be so great, based upon the present airport locations at Fort Worth and Dallas, that it is doubtful that we could reasonably count upon Fort Worth or Dallas undertaking such a job.

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While runways of great strength must be provided to bear the weight of the larger airplanes of the future, those runways are not reasonably required by very many people other than the airlines and military forces and a lot of the cities are going to say that if such runways are required for air transport operation the airlines should bear the expense of them and not undertake to "saddle" that requirement upon the community.

3. On the basis of our airport requirements for the future, if we should undertake to require either Dallas or Fort Worth to construct for our use the type of runways that we must have, it would be a very logical conclusion that the charges for our utilization of the airport and of the runways would be greatly increased over the amounts now paid and might reasonably be beyond our financial ability to provide.
4. We are going to require another airport, meeting the requirements of the future, in the Fort Worth-Dallas section, reasonably suited to the requirements of both of the cities and not located at either the location of the present Fort Worth or the present Dallas airport.
5. This airport can be located and constructed at this time, while Government funds of substantial nature are available for participation, or we can wait some years until the requirement is forced upon us and hazard the opportunity of receiving Government aid and assistance. If Government aid at that time should not be forthcoming, nearly the entire expense of the undertaking will have to be borne by people who will then utilize the airport, primarily the scheduled airlines.

Looking at this matter solely from the standpoint of a citizen of Fort Worth, some might answer this question by saying, "Well, if Fort Worth Municipal Airport cannot be made adequate, the airlines can use the airport which will be available at the Fort Worth bomber plant".

That might be true if we looked at this matter solely from the standpoint of Fort Worth, but from the standpoint of the company we must take into consideration our requirements to serve both of the cities, Fort Worth and Dallas.

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If there is not built soon an airport adequate to serve the requirements of Fort Worth and Dallas, and if later we should go to the citizens of Dallas and say that their airport is not sufficient for our requirements and that they should build another one for us, it might be quite reasonable for them to say that the airport they have meets the requirements of the majority of the people who fly airplanes in the neighborhood and if the airlines require a different kind of airport the airlines should take on the obligation of constructing the airport themselves.

So when we say that the bomber plant airport at Fort Worth might reasonably serve the needs of Fort Worth for the future, we do not, so far as the company is concerned, solve the problem of having some assurance that an airport will be provided which will reasonably serve the requirements of both Fort Worth and Dallas.

An airport site is now available in the vicinity of Arlington, located reasonably close to a center line between Fort Worth and Dallas, and perhaps as close to that center point as a location can be obtained without endeavoring to use terrain which would materially increase the cost of construction of an airport.

Arlington has evidenced its willingness to sponsor the project, and the Government, through the CAA, has already publically announced its willingness to allot, at this time, substantially \$500,000.00 to the Arlington project. There is reason to believe, judging from some of our conversations in Washington, that additional funds might reasonably be available for that project if the purchase can be completed without further aid.

In order to get this airport project under way, the land must be acquired and in that undertaking Arlington will require the assistance of the airlines perhaps to the extent of nearly one hundred per cent of the cost of the land. What, if any, buildings will be later constructed on the property and who will build them can later be decided, but a decision must soon be had on the question of whether or not the airlines are willing to aid Arlington in the purchase of the land and are willing to aid, through contract, in the future upkeep and maintenance of the airport.

Mr. Amon G. Carter

Whether or not we now give consideration to the utilization of an airport at Arlington which will serve the joint transportation requirements of both Fort Worth and Dallas, I believe that an investment on our part in the land, and an agreement to aid in the maintenance of the airport, both of which will be required before the project is undertaken, will be an investment well worth while on the part of the airlines serving Fort Worth and Dallas.

From the standpoint of the company, it may be that a conclusion on this matter "boils down" to this:

1. That neither of the present municipal airports at Fort Worth or Dallas can be made reasonably adequate for the requirements of the future; and
2. Will we participate in the construction of a Fort Worth-Dallas airport at this time, when the Government is willing to be of aid, or will we participate at a later date without any assurance now as to whether or not the Government will at that time be available.

We very sincerely believe, as this matter affects the company, that the company should now participate in the purchase of the land required and participate in the making of a contract with Arlington which would give to the people of Arlington some assurance that money for maintaining the airport will be forthcoming. You know, of course, that in order to obtain substantial Government aid in the construction of an airport a community must reasonably well assure the Government that the airport will in the future be kept in good condition.

It, of course, can be said, "That's just another method of edging into the operation and use of a Fort Worth-Dallas airport". That may be entirely true, but even if it be true I do not see how we can reasonably pass up the opportunity of securing an airport which will reasonably well serve the requirements of both cities for many years to come and on a basis upon which a very substantial part of the investment is borne by the Government. This is especially true if a conclusion is reached that such an airport is going to be required within a reasonably short number of years, and I, frankly, do not see how we can escape that conclusion.

I know, of course, how you feel about this matter in general and your feeling is entirely understandable, but I know also that you are interested in any project for the constructive good of Fort Worth, of aviation and of American Airlines.

Mr. Amon G. Carter

So far as Fort Worth is concerned, it has already made a very substantial investment in its present municipal airport and I doubt that it would be either willing or able to finance the improvements to that airport which would be required if the airport was brought up to the standards which would be required in future operation. Fort Worth, through the construction of a Fort Worth-Dallas airport, has the opportunity to have assurance of an adequate airport for the Fort Worth area without any considerable investment upon its part and without any obligations for the future with respect to substantial expenditures to be made to the Fort Worth Municipal Airport.

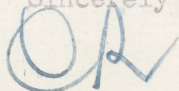
I have thought for some time, and have so expressed it to you, that we might be justified in forgetting about an airport between Fort Worth and Dallas and relying entirely upon the opportunity in the future of having substantial improvements at the Fort Worth and Dallas municipal airports. After going over this matter very diligently several times of late, I think that that previous conclusion was entirely in error and I believe now that in the best interests of Fort Worth, Dallas, aviation and American Airlines we should undertake to do what we can to see that an adequate airport is made available in the Fort Worth-Dallas area.

I should like very much to go ahead now and make a commitment on behalf of the company to aid in the purchase of the land which will be required in the Arlington project and to make another commitment to bear a portion of the future maintenance expense of that airport. We do not now have to make any decision about whether or not we will commit the company later to erect buildings on the airport. That is a matter which we can discuss a great deal more in detail when we have the opportunity of a discussion about it. I, frankly, do not like to have to discuss this matter with you by letter, but it may be that we will have to decide this rather basic question concerning land and runways before I can have the opportunity of talking with you about it.

I should like very much to feel that you are impressed with the reasonableness of the position which is taken in this letter and of the need of doing something about the matter at this time. I should like to feel that you will advocate that we go ahead and push this matter and have it accomplished while the Government is in the frame of mind to make a substantial contribution to the undertaking.

Would you be willing for me to go ahead on the basis that I have your "blessing" in going into this matter to the extent which I have endeavored to outline in this letter?

Sincerely yours,



C. R. Smith