



Tweed New Haven Airport Authority (TNHAA)

Environmental Stewardship Committee (ESC)

Minutes of April 15, 2025 via Zoom

Attendance

Members in Attendance: Chuck Licata, Rose Chatterton, Giovanni Zinn, Carlos Eyzaguirre, and Justin Donaldson.

Members Absent: Ken Dagliere, Linda Hennessey, David Valentino, Michael Jones, Jeremy Nielson, and Tom Rafter. A Special Meeting of the Tweed New Haven Airport Authority prevented some members with overlapping roles from attending.

Others in Attendance: Tom Cavaliere and Andrew King. Additional viewers joined virtually. A full list of speakers is included in the Public Comment section below.

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes from February 18, 2025 Meeting
2. Traffic Calming Project Update
3. Public Comment
4. Next Meeting – Date, Time, Topics

Minutes

The Environmental Stewardship Committee (ESC) meeting was called to order at 5:04 PM by Tom Cavaliere, who chaired the meeting in Tom Rafter's absence. The February 18, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved following a motion by Ms. Chatterton and second by Mr. Eyzaguirre.

Mr. Cavaliere opened with remarks thanking the public for ongoing feedback regarding traffic concerns around Fort Hale Road and Nathan Hale School. He noted that the evening's meeting would focus exclusively on the proposed Traffic Calming Project and introduced Giovanni Zinn, City Engineer for New Haven, to present updated plans.

Mr. Zinn provided an overview of the project's goals: reducing traffic on Fort Hale Road, minimizing neighborhood congestion, improving internal airport circulation, and protecting pedestrian safety near Nathan Hale School. Key updates include a new exit-only route at Dean and Burr Streets, a mountable roundabout to slow traffic, sidewalk additions, and an electronic message board to redirect traffic away from the school during drop-off and pick-up hours.

Construction is expected to begin in Spring 2025 and take one to two months, with three phases planned and two-way traffic maintained throughout.

Committee members raised concerns about the potential for delays to shift traffic into school hours, the continued two-way use of Fort Hale Road, bus parking issues, and pedestrian access near Dean Street. Mr. Zinn and airport staff responded that internal improvements are designed to reduce backups, traffic

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volume will be lowered by approximately 30%, and ongoing coordination with transit providers will address bus congestion. Additional pedestrian enhancements are also planned.

The meeting then moved to public comment period focused on the traffic calming project. Mr. Cavaliere reminded attendees that his contact information was available in the chat for any unrelated follow-up questions or concerns.

Public Comment

Per the City of New Haven's request, a public comment period specific to the Traffic Calming Project will be included at this meeting only.

Speakers: Lisa Bassani, Karylee Hall, Gloria Bellacicco, Lisa McHugh, Joe D., Caroline, Debbie, Leah Rumore, Lynne, Leland Moore, Sara Amato, Tania, Lisa Waring, Kimberly DeMayo, Kathy Gonzalez, Paul Campion, Petrina Yoxall, Becka, LC, and John Kraszewski.

Lisa Bassani criticized the decision to hold the meeting on Zoom, claiming it was dismissive of the community. She claimed that the airport expansion has caused serious traffic problems due to a lack of supporting infrastructure. She stated that the terminal cannot handle the current volume and alleged school staff at Nathan Hale are also concerned. She expressed doubt about the airport's promises to limit traffic near the school, referencing past statements about flight curfews that she believes were not followed. She questioned the effectiveness of using electronic signs to redirect drivers, suggesting people will follow GPS instead. She also claimed that traffic officers near the airport have not been active in managing traffic. Bassani said more than 250 signatures were collected from residents opposing the plan and stated the community has not been properly engaged. She urged the airport to pause the project and hold another meeting in person.

In response, officials acknowledged her concerns and noted efforts to manage traffic and increase enforcement. They agreed to extend the public comment period from 90 seconds to 3 minutes.

Karylee Hall voiced concern that the proposed traffic changes focus too narrowly on school drop-off and pick-up times. She claimed this overlooks other times when children and families are present at Nathan Hale School, such as for meetings or after-school activities. Hall expressed skepticism that drivers would follow signage, suggesting that in her view, most drivers rely on GPS and may ignore traffic directions. She also pointed to the presence of raised road sections near the school as evidence that the area was already recognized as hazardous. Hall argued that increasing traffic near the school puts children at risk and claimed the airport is being expanded in a location that is not suitable.

Gloria Bellacicco questioned who conducted the traffic studies for the project and when they were completed. She claimed Lot C had over 700 cars parked, and expressed concern that combining Lot C traffic with arrivals would increase vehicles using the proposed traffic circle and traveling past Nathan Hale School, the senior center, and local churches. She stated that signs would not be effective, claiming drivers often ignore existing traffic controls. Bellacicco also mentioned a belief that the airport may have influenced GPS routing. Airport staff clarified they have no control over Google Maps routing. She

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expressed distrust in the project team, claiming previous commitments on air filters and noise mitigation were not fulfilled.

In response, officials provided traffic data sources and counts from the airport and the Connecticut Department of Transportation. They explained Lot C represents about 10–15% of airport traffic, and the new exit is expected to carry approximately 80 vehicles per hour during peak times.

Lisa McHugh expressed frustration with traffic congestion, noise, and lack of enforcement. She claimed police presence is ineffective and recent. She believes the proposed traffic circle will worsen confusion and congestion, especially during events or peak traffic times. McHugh described ongoing issues with double parking, blocked driveways, and confrontations with drivers. She stated that residents feel ignored, and the airport's actions have made conditions worse.

Joe D. raised concerns about congestion caused by vehicles entering the airport, particularly at the departures drop-off area. He suggested that the main traffic issue stems from cars stopping to unload passengers, which causes backups on Fort Hale Road. He asked who would fund the proposed roundabout; airport staff clarified it would be paid for using community betterment funds. Joe concluded that these issues should be addressed before moving forward with the roundabout.

Caroline shared concerns about traffic violations near her home. She described people dropping off passengers in front of her house to avoid backups and expressed skepticism about the airport's claim of a 30% traffic reduction, citing unpredictable factors like weather that can dramatically increase congestion. She stated that the airport is currently handling more traffic than it can manage and called for stronger enforcement.

In response, officials acknowledged the issue of widespread disregard for traffic laws and agreed it is a broader citywide challenge. They expressed openness to placing a police officer at key intersections during peak times and encouraged residents to report problematic days directly to the airport's community liaison to help coordinate enforcement.

Debbie expressed concern that routing more airport traffic onto Burr Street and Townsend Avenue would worsen already heavy congestion. She noted increased traffic from nearby condos and frequent difficulties exiting her driveway. She also described unsafe driving behavior near the seawall and school, including speeding and passing on curves. Debbie called for more active police enforcement and improvements at the Burr and Townsend intersection to manage expected traffic increases.

Officials acknowledged Townsend Avenue's high traffic volume and history of safety concerns. Mr. Zinn noted ongoing coordination with the state on improvements, including raised crosswalks and future traffic calming through the Shoreline Greenway project. He and Mr. King agreed that the intersection at Burr and Townsend should be monitored after the traffic circle is implemented to assess safety impacts and adjust operations as needed.

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Leah Rumore suggested the airport explore ways to influence GPS routing to help redirect traffic, based on her experience managing construction sites. She raised safety concerns at the Hall and Burr intersection due to poor visibility caused by parked cars and recommended adjusting parking or adding bollards. She also suggested creating a designated area for Uber drivers and using professional flaggers instead of relying solely on police officers for traffic control.

Airport staff agreed to explore GPS options and look into safety improvements at Hall and Burr. They acknowledged ongoing issues with Uber but plan to revisit discussions. Construction on the East Side entrance is expected to begin within the year. Staff are also considering flagging companies to support traffic control, while still relying on police for higher-risk situations.

Lynne raised concerns about the effectiveness of directing traffic away from Nathan Hale School during peak times, noting that airport passengers often arrive well in advance of their departures, potentially creating congestion even during restricted windows. She questioned how traffic could be rerouted if the new exit must be blocked during school hours. Lynne also asked whether the legal petitions challenging the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) had been resolved.

Airport staff clarified that the FONSI petitions are still pending but do not prevent the project from moving forward. Under existing lease agreements, permitting and construction can proceed at the airport's risk. Regarding traffic, officials explained that no restrictions will be placed on airport arrivals. Instead, during school pickup and drop-off times, all traffic exiting the airport will be directed to turn right toward Fort Hale Road, maintaining the current route to avoid school-related congestion.

Leland Moore expressed concern about enforcement of the proposed traffic changes and questioned whether a pilot program had been conducted to study the impact of rerouting traffic before implementing permanent infrastructure like the roundabout. He also asked why traffic is still routed down Fort Hale Road during school pickup and drop-off times, given that residents there are heavily impacted.

Officials stated that while the roundabout and sidewalk improvements are intended to be permanent, the use of the new traffic pattern for airport traffic is expected to be temporary until the terminal relocates to the east side. They confirmed that the exit gate at Burr Street has been used during congestion as a pilot, and observed reductions in traffic backups. Regarding Fort Hale Road, they noted it is the current primary route and preferable to alternatives that would direct traffic closer to Nathan Hale School.

Sara Amato, a New Haven resident and PTO president at Nathan Hale School, voiced strong opposition to the proposed traffic plan, stating it would send additional vehicles through an already congested and hazardous school zone. As a parent of four children who attend the school, she emphasized the risks to students who walk, bike, or scooter due to the high volume of local traffic during drop-off and pick-up times. Amato described previous safety issues, including traffic backups and dangerous driving behaviors

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near the school, and cited parent concerns regularly shared on school social media. She argued that even a small increase in traffic from the airport would negatively affect student safety and expressed doubt that signage or traffic controls would reliably prevent cars from passing the school during critical hours. She urged the committee to reconsider the plan and include parents in further discussions.

City and airport officials acknowledged Amato's concerns and thanked her for her role at the school. Mr. Zinn offered to meet with her, the school principal, and others to explore additional ways to improve school traffic safety. Mr. Cavaliere also invited continued conversation and encouraged her to follow up directly using the contact information provided.

Tania expressed frustration with the airport's impact on her neighborhood. She supported earlier speakers' concerns and said her family has participated in these meetings for decades without seeing meaningful change. She described significant traffic issues on weekends, worsened by events, emergency vehicles, and Lighthouse Park traffic. Tania claimed airport passengers drive aggressively and with little regard for the neighborhood. Tania concluded by stating her strong opposition to the airport's expansion and voiced skepticism that the city would take resident concerns seriously.

Lisa Waring questioned the disabled public chat feature and expressed concern over the airport's lack of transparency and community engagement. She challenged the claim that the airport cannot influence airline scheduling, arguing that lower flight volumes would reduce the traffic burden. Waring asked why more aggressive efforts aren't made to push back on airlines when the community is clearly impacted.

Airport officials explained that while chat is disabled to prevent disruptions, public Q&A remains available. In response to her main concern, staff acknowledged they do push back on airlines when operations exceed airport capacity, as seen during the recent holiday season. However, they clarified that federal regulations prevent airports from limiting flight volumes based on neighborhood impact alone. They committed to sharing relevant regulations and grant assurances with the public through the airport's website.

Kimberly DeMayo questioned whether Tweed Airport has any authority to limit the number of flights scheduled by airlines like Avelo and Breeze, given the apparent strain on the neighborhood. She expressed concern about increased flight volumes and their effects on local traffic, especially near Burr Street, where visibility and congestion are issues. DeMayo said it often feels like the airlines are in control, not the airport or community.

Airport representatives explained that while Tweed works closely with the airlines, the airport operates within a highly regulated environment where federal rules limit how much control it has over flight volumes. Capacity decisions are based on factors like terminal space, ramp availability, and infrastructure limits, not community impact alone. Officials acknowledged the challenge, noting that FAA regulations prioritize airline and passenger access. DeMayo appreciated the explanation and said it gave her more clarity, though it raised further concerns.

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Kathy Gonzalez expressed strong opposition to the proposed traffic plan. She criticized the lack of early communication with families and suggested the project was being pushed through without proper public awareness or in-person meetings. Gonzalez emphasized that Nathan Hale students are present at the school during many hours outside of regular drop-off and pick-up times, citing after-school activities and community use. She referenced a recent pedestrian accident on Townsend Avenue and questioned the accuracy of projected traffic volumes. Gonzalez also raised concerns about the safety of the Burr and Townsend intersection and asked who would be held accountable if another serious incident occurs.

Mr. Zinn responded that he is familiar with Townsend Avenue and has spent time at Nathan Hale during school hours and for family activities. He acknowledged the area's challenges and reaffirmed his willingness to meet on-site to discuss further improvements. He emphasized past efforts to improve safety, such as the installation of a raised crosswalk in front of the school, and expressed a continued commitment to working with the community to address concerns.

Paul Champion raised concerns about the long timeline for addressing traffic problems at the airport. He questioned why the airport has not repurposed internal areas, like the rental car lot, to better manage vehicle flow. He said the airport's congestion poses a safety risk and criticized the roundabout plan as an ineffective solution. Champion also expressed frustration that airlines seem to dictate operations while community impact is overlooked. He urged the airport to explore off-site parking and shuttle options instead of continuing to shift the burden onto nearby neighborhoods.

Airport staff responded that internal traffic patterns are being redesigned to allow more vehicles to queue on airport property, particularly in the arrivals area. They acknowledged that the roundabout is only one part of a broader strategy. Officials also confirmed that they are actively pursuing off-site parking options to expand shuttle service and reduce road congestion. They emphasized their ongoing efforts to improve traffic management and minimize community impact as passenger volume grows.

Petrina Yoxall expressed frustration with the airport's ongoing impact on her neighborhood. She said rerouting traffic through the new gate has not solved congestion on Burr Street and argued that the airport has outgrown its location. Yoxall described a decline in quality of life due to increased noise, fumes, traffic, and nighttime flight activity. She questioned the effectiveness of the voluntary noise curfew. She also raised concerns about safety, emergency access, and a lack of accountability or consideration from the airport and the city.

Airport staff acknowledged her concerns and explained that late-night flight activity shown online often reflects delayed flights, which are exempt from the voluntary curfew agreement. They emphasized that aircraft noise is federally regulated and the curfew is a voluntary agreement between the airlines and the City of New Haven. Staff also directed her to the airport's website for additional information on noise regulation and mitigation programs, and encouraged her to continue reaching out with concerns.

Becka expressed strong disappointment with the airport's expansion and its impact on the neighborhood. She said she did her research before moving in and never anticipated the level of

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disruption currently experienced. Becka described worsening air quality due to fumes, especially in the mornings and evenings. She criticized the decision to route traffic near a church, senior center, and school, calling it inappropriate for a residential area. She also voiced frustration with the City of New Haven and the Mayor's support of the airport's growth, questioning whether financial targets influenced the decision. Lastly, Becka raised concerns about the lack of focus on senior residents and said the changes are making it difficult for her to imagine staying in the neighborhood.

Airport staff thanked Becka for her comments and encouraged her to follow up directly using the contact information provided. They acknowledged her concerns and reiterated a willingness to continue the conversation and share updates on efforts being made beyond traffic planning.

LC expressed concerns about airport-related noise and pollution affecting daily life. She emphasized that the airport's current operations have outgrown the surrounding infrastructure. LC also raised concerns about Avelo Airlines' reported involvement in deportation flights, claiming it conflicts with the values of New Haven residents and constitutes community exploitation. She questioned why investment in the airport continues while such ethical issues remain unresolved and asked what protections the City could put in place to avoid future harm.

Andrew King explained that airport operations and investment are not directly tied to any single airline. He clarified that Avports is the airport's primary developer and investor. He stated that federal regulations prohibit local authorities from restricting commercial air service based on volume or airline practices. King noted that multiple carriers have expressed interest in the Tweed market due to strong passenger demand. Carlos Eyzaguirre from the city's Economic Development Department added that city officials, including the mayor, have condemned Avelo's reported actions and are exploring ways to formally voice opposition, while acknowledging that regulatory limits.

John Kraszewski expressed appreciation for Tweed Airport's economic impact on New Haven but raised significant concerns about traffic being routed near Nathan Hale School. He estimated the proposed plan could add roughly 2,800 vehicles per week through the school zone and emphasized that even small increases pose safety risks. He suggested rerouting outbound airport traffic via Burr Street to Stuyvesant Avenue to avoid the school zone and recommended using Main Street and Charter Oak to ease inbound congestion. He also noted the limitations of relying solely on police officers for traffic control and advocated for dedicated traffic staff.

Officials acknowledged John's suggestions and concerns. Giovanni Zinn explained that while Stuyvesant Avenue was considered, elevation challenges and internal airport pinch points made it less feasible. He said the proposed design allows flexibility, including directing traffic away from the school during peak hours and adapting signage as needed. Andrew King agreed the current intersection must change to improve safety and traffic flow. Both reiterated that protecting school safety remains a top priority, and future refinements to the traffic plan will consider John's suggestions and the broader community input.

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Next Meeting

Mr. Cavaliere closed the meeting by thanking the City of New Haven, the Environmental Stewardship Committee members, and the public for participating in the discussion. He reminded attendees that they can reach out to him or Giovanni Zinn directly with any questions or comments.

Ms. Chatterton motioned to adjourn the meeting, which Mr. Zinn seconded. The meeting officially adjourned at 7:42 PM on April 15. The next Environmental Stewardship Committee meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2025.