



## My Turn

## What a deal!

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Regarding last week's My Turn about the airport: The author was correct that it is light aircraft (including the single-engine air tankers used by the Forest Service) which are most affected by crosswinds. But the far bigger safety issue, affecting all aircraft, is that, at 5,800 feet, the existing runway is just too darned short:

- Eighteen percent shorter than the the runway at Questa (most readers probably don't even know Questa has an airport!);
- Twenty-nine percent shorter than the runway at Dulce;
- Thirty-one percent shorter than the longer runway in Ratn (which has two, and is at a lower elevation);
- Forty-one percent shorter than the longer runway at Las Vegas, New Mexico (which also has two, which are in the same configuration as the proposed Taos layout); and
- Fifty-three percent shorter than Angel Fire (which, admittedly, has a higher elevation).

Over the years, several aircraft have accidentally run off the end of the single Taos runway. (Fortunately, there's not much off the end of the runway to the southwest that could cause injury.) Even some common sixseat single-engine propeller airplanes (of the type used by many visiting tourist pilots) use up to 75 percent of the runway to obtain flying speed; 50 percent is considered optimal for safety.

Even if a pilot has correctly calculated the takeoff distance required and is therefore reasonably certain the takeoff can occur safely, it's still scary seeing the end of the runway coming up in the windscreen as one waits for the airplane to build enough speed to get airborne! Yet it happens every day at Taos.

Unfortunately, Highway 64 prevents extending the existing runway to the northeast, and the land to the southwest of the airport is all owned by Taos Pueblo. So there was no choice but to plan a new runway that wasn't affected by either, and that is exactly what's been planned for (and the land purchased! ) for over 20 years now.