



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

## In response to Councilor Hahn

Kelly Rudy

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This is an open letter to Councilor Fritz Hahn in response to his "airport expansion analysis" letter in *The Taos News* on Nov. 5.

Sir, when you campaigned for Town Counsel you told me you would break the deadlock in the town government, stop the conflicts with the county and advocate for economic progress. Now with your airport expansion analysis you seem to prefer keeping Taos a poor farming community rather than increase economic opportunities an improved airport will bring.

Historically, communities connected to the world by a reliable transportation system thrived while those that are not struggled to survive and grow.

This has been true, be it water ways, railways, highways or airports. When the railroad connected the west in the 19th century, those fortunate to have it come through their towns grew while others lost out. Likewise when the interstate highway system was constructed. Today, an airport does the same thing. It connects us to the world so we can conduct trade and bring visitors to spend money in our businesses.

Having lived in Taos for over 12 years, I understand the appeal of being at the end of the world in our little "Shangri-La."

Like most, I don't want Taos turned into another Santa Fe, Aspen or Vail. However, to sustain or grow our economy we need infrastructure to provide for that. An airport expansion is a long over due measure towards economic growth.

It amazes me how our government representatives campaign on change, progress and economic development yet once in office do nothing to move in that direction. We've fought for an airport expansion for decades. Many advocated for a road bypass of downtown to ease traffic congestion that detracts from our community.

Why does the vocal, antigrowth, anti-progress lobby have so much influence on you?

Do we want to remain a backwater community working multiple jobs to eek out a meager living? Do we want to lose our youth to bigger cities or drugs and alcohol for lack of opportunities in Taos? Or do we want to invest in a transportation system infrastructure improvement which brings \$22 million to our community for a meager \$1.4 million investment with greater long term opportunities?

Mr. Hahn, your analysis is extremely short-sighted leading me to believe your position is only geared towards re-election. You convinced me to vote for you because you promised change, progress and an end to the government gridlock. Now you look like every do-nothing councilman who preceded you. You favor the status quo because you are afraid to upset anyone. Well guess what? I'm upset.

Here is my analysis of the airport expansion:

**Safety:** Longer runways and cross wind runways equal a safer airport that is more attractive to pilots who want to fly here or to commuter airline operators who may consider doing business here.

**Welfare:** The short term construction project will not only create direct jobs for two years but the indirect effects of pouring \$23 million into the local economy impacts others too.

Long term economic impacts of this improved transportation system are immeasurable. People with airplanes have money to spend. Commuter airlines make it more attractive for tourists who don't want to drive 2.5 hours from Albuquerque. Lifting of the construction moratorium means more badly needed hangers can be built creating other revenue streams.

**Fire:** Response time for fire fighting flights can be greatly reduced.

**Environmental impact:** Most aircraft that will be flying into Taos do not have fuel dumping capabilities. Those that do only dump in dire emergencies to reduce weight. A longer runway or one more into the wind makes weight less critical thus they are less likely to dump.

**Military flights:** The military has no operational need to fly into Taos except to assist in a natural disaster. This would be a good thing.

Mr. Hahn, do you still insist money is better spent on acequias? How many farms are within the Taos town limits that need funds to improve the existing acequia system? How many people would benefit from that? How will that grow our economy in the long term?

*Kelly Rudy is a retired pilot, having flown 28 years in the Air Force and with American Airlines .*