

My Turn

Questions about the airport expansion

Iris Keltz

The Taos News, 6/25/2015

I just said goodbye to a friend who made the mistake of coming to Taos without a car. After a wonderful visit, she needed to get to Denver to catch a plane home and discovered there was no bus. When she lived in Taos years ago ears ago there was an old fashioned depot with transportation to Albuquerque and to Denver.

Two ride shares on Craig's List fell through. If she could have gotten to Albuquerque there was a bus to Denver for \$38. Affordable. But that also meant finding a ride and traveling 130 miles south to catch a bus to go north.

Trapped in Taos with no alternative in sight, she rented a car from Enterprise at the cost of over \$150 for one day. The only available car was at the airport so the manager shuttled her and her luggage over there, leaving other customers waiting. If my friend did not have a viable credit card and drivers license she might still be waiting. Enterprise was the only way to get to Denver.

According to *The Taos News*, the town is willing to spend \$1.6 million on the airport expansion, not including the \$24 million "funded largely by the feds." Which brings me to an important question: who is the airport expansion for? Will there be affordable commuter jets for working people, students or most retirees? I have friends living in Taos who believe travel to and from national airports will become easier and more affordable. That would be welcome but I have seen no evidence to support this assumption.

The airport expansion appears to be for those who either own their own plane or can afford private expensive small jets. They land in the regional Taos airport and are whisked straight to the ski valley where all their needs are met. It's unlikely that most of them will explore the town of Taos.

The Taos News editorial states that because the expansion has started, as in "heavy equipment is (already) moving dirt at the airport" it's a done deal. Time for those who oppose modernization and so-called progress to be quiet. But the people who call Taos home will be living with the airport for a long, long time.

Important questions must be answered.

How will the expansion affect the majority of residents?

How will property values be affected? What about air, water and noise pollution? How will it bring jobs and prosperity to Taos? Will there be an affordable computer plane to Albuquerque or Denver? Before the town spends money on an expensive airport expansion, what about an old-fashioned bus service for the 98 percent?

Keltz has been a resident of Taos for over 40 years. She has two adult kids living on opposite coasts and would welcome affordable transportation.