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DEKALB COUNTY
NEWS RELEASE

FEBRUARY 27, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Environmental Impact of PDK Airport to be Studied

DECATUR - After decades of heated debate about what types of aircraft should be allowed to use DeKalb County's DeKalb Peachtree Airport (PDK), DeKalb County Government, PDK Airport and Open DeKalb Inc., have partnered to retain an environmental health expert to analyze air and noise pollution from PDK Airport. Open DeKalb is a community group that previously planned to sue the County over the types of aircraft allowed to use the Airport.

P. Barry Ryan, PhD, a professor in the Department of Environmental Health at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health is one of the foremost experts in the United States analyzing air pollution from aircraft operations, and is among a small group of chemists qualified to conduct a major study of this type.

Dr. Ryan designed the study with significant input from Open DeKalb, the County, and PDK Airport. The purpose of the study is to secure reliable environmental impact data upon which all stakeholders can rely upon when making decisions about airport operations. The study is being funded by airport-generated funds that are not available for other County uses.

"The study covers a full year so that seasonal changes in noise and air pollution impacts can be properly assessed," explains Ryan. "We will measure fine particulate matter, or soot, directly upwind and downwind of the airport as well as along take-off and landing paths near the airport. Noise data will be collected at four, fixed-site monitors in the community as well as a portable monitor moved from place to place." Monitoring will begin the week of February 25, 2013.

"Motivated by concerns for open and informed decision-making about the airport and the health and safety of our community, Open DeKalb raised the necessary funds and committed to litigate enforcement of a weight limit on aircraft at PDK," recalled Fred Fuerst, M.D., president of Open DeKalb Inc. But in 2008, newly-elected CEO Burrell Ellis brokered a high-level meeting among Open DeKalb, Airport administrators and County officials. The stakeholders found common ground in wanting the Airport to operate in an open, healthy environment that serves the business community and protects the highly-populated area surrounding the airport."

Attorney Susan Gouinlock, legal counsel for Open DeKalb, Inc., explains that there were significant changes in the variables Open DeKalb had to consider in deciding to support this study rather than to file a lawsuit: "Burrell Ellis had become the new CEO; Lee Rimmel left

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PDK and was succeeded as Airport Director by Mike Van Wie. The County Commission, led by Commissioners Elaine Boyer and Jeff Rader, was now willing to take a hard look at the community's concerns about decision making at PDK and its environmental impacts on the community."

As Dr. Fuerst explains: "Once it became clear to Open DeKalb that we could finally work together with the County and the Airport to seek facts based on an objective scientific study, litigation was not the best option anymore."

"Litigation is always expensive and has risks no matter how strong your case," Gouinlock emphasized. "Once we knew that the County administration under CEO Ellis and Airport staff led by Director Van Wie wanted the same information we did--whether larger, heavier aircraft cause more noise and/or air pollution in and around PDK--the decision to work together rather than to litigate was an easier one."

"We are fortunate to have the expertise and resources of Dr. Ryan and the Rollins School of Public Health locally, just miles from the Airport," says Van Wie. "The \$500,000 study is being funded by the Airport Enterprise Fund -- money raised at PDK that cannot be used for other County expenditures. This is a major expense for the Airport, but we agree that informed decisions are likely to be the best ones."

Commissioner Jeff Rader characterized the Emory study as "a major step in the right direction." "It will provide solid data to guide the County Commission in making decisions about this major public facility that impacts air quality and economic development in our County," adds Rader.

The work should be completed by the early winter of 2014 and the final report available to the County Commission and the public shortly thereafter.

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