Airport Jurisdictional Issues – Everything has a History

April 10, 2018
Washington, DC
Dr. Janet R. Bednarek
University of Dayton
Where in the World?
Atlanta, 1930s
Cleveland, 1930s
Chicago Midway, 1941
Wold-Chamberlain 1930s
(Future Minneapolis-St Paul)
Mines Field, 1930
(Future Los Angeles)
Los Angeles (LAX), 1930s
Miami 36th Street Airport, 1930s (Miami International)
Early city planners (1920s-1930s) showed great interest in airports, particularly between 1927 and early 1930s.

Archibald Black published a series of articles in various journals, both aero and urban.

John Nolan (1928) published an article with an elaborate plan for airport area (included multi-modal transportation and housing) – could be seen as foreshadowing later aerotropolis ideas.
Zoning was a relatively new tool

Village of Euclid v. Ambler (1926)

Cities using new zoning power focused primarily on urban and residential zoning

1930s: Most cities de-funded city planning

Courts hostile to “airport zoning” – generally only approved zoning dealing with height restrictions or other clear “hazards to aerial navigation”
Post-WWII Suburbanization

* Airport sites that had been in outlying areas in 1920s through 1940s became locations witnessing post-war suburbanization
* Lack of “airport” zoning led to residential construction in vicinity of airports (noise issue; Doolittle Commission)
* Airports, even when connected to city, often surrounded by multiple jurisdictions interested in population growth
Chicago Metro
Cleveland
Dallas-Fort Worth
Even cities where the airports remained entirely within city boundaries – development (often residential) surrounded the airports in the 1950s and 1960s
Phoenix
Los Angeles
Chicago Midway
Airports are owned and managed by local governments.

Often subject to overlaying jurisdictions – city, county, state, public authority or special use districts (i.e. park districts)
PNYNJ manages multiple airports in the New York City region

- Airports under lease to PNYNJ
- Still local input of multiple jurisdictions
Wold Chamberlain Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport owned and managed by metropolitan airport authority

In 1960s, when debating closing existing airport in favor of new airport, discovered jurisdictional issue

Heart of airport property originally park land and under Minnesota law must remain part land, limiting new uses of airport property
Los Angeles Metro

- Los Angeles World Airports Owns LAX and Van Nuys, plus airport property in Palmdale (not shown)
- Multiple other airports under multiple jurisdictions often surrounded by multiple jurisdictions
Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport

- Kenton County, Kentucky, Airport Board owns and manages the airport
- Airport is located in Boone County, Kentucky – original airport enabling act allowed one county to own and manage an airport in another county
- Most of the noise issues involve western suburbs of Cincinnati
Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG)
CVG

1954

2012
Many airport owners and managers around the country found that the “best” way to manage land use around the airport was to own or otherwise control the land.

In many cases the airport owner/manager purchased property.

In others local economic development entities purchased property to develop “airport friendly” activities.

Karsner: Phoenix, Tampa, Detroit