

*(This is a cut & paste of an email sent to Pierce County Executive Pat McCarthy and the County Council Members on February 15.)*

Good Day, Ms McCarthy;

Thank you for allowing me a contrary opinion on the alleged security at the airports. I prefer, though, we refer to it as 24-hour gate policy. As we know, the only things locks do is keep honest people being honest. Also, be aware that an “improvement to public and airport safety” is certainly in the eyes of the beholder, depending on whether it is viewed as part of big-government, or the oppression it places upon small businesses and their operators. I offer the following in a purely constructive manner; I very much hope you will read it with fresh eyes and conclude I am not being destructive. Rather, I try to present that contrary opinion supported with factual content.

Below is a forward of an email I sent over a week ago to Deb Wallace and Brian Ziegler, prompted in part by the note you sent me on February 6th. As you can see by reading it, I gave Ms Wallace yet another opportunity for discussion and compromise of the 24-hour gate policy.

As of this writing, I have not received any response, either from Ms Wallace or Mr. Ziegler. Zero. Not even a ‘we’ll look into it and get back with you.’

I honestly do not understand that thought process.

This 24-hour gate policy is defective in the following ways:

- It is an impediment to being able to conduct fair trade, as it discourages potential customers from visiting businesses behind the gate, while directing those customers to the businesses that have unrestricted walk-up access.
- It does nothing to improve security; defects in design, function, and repair of the fencing and gates are still blatant after many months and years of neglect.
- It discourages aspiring aviators from visiting the airport to find out how aviation as a career or as a hobby can benefit them. Peering through a chain-link fence at aircraft does nothing to satiate the aviation ‘disease’. I dare say there is not one aircraft owner or rated pilot, that when approached by a prospective member joining our ranks, wouldn’t stop and spend 15 or 20 minutes with that prospect. You need to understand, the flying public is unlike the general public; until you are around it and absorb it, you cannot understand ‘it’ is a ‘disease’.
- An undercurrent to this policy is the deception passed along concerning crime statistics at the airport locations. The county website has a page that folks can recall crime statistics; information taken from that page pales in comparison to the crime wave that is being purported by the airport administrator.
- As a business interruption, should we receive a request from the gate call-box when my office personnel is not available, I must leave a project I am working on to answer the call. This interruption can lead to errors in production, and by this policy being endorsed, could implicate the county in a unflattering position.
- As another business interruption, the U. S. Postal Service will not go through the closed gate, even if provided a code. This has caused several trips for my office manager to the South Hill Post Office to retrieve parcels and certified mail that otherwise would have been brought to our door. The lines are long, wait time is a very real thing, as well as necessitating the trip to and from on Meridian Avenue; this, in itself, a dangerous task.

- Do we really know who is at the gate asking to be buzzed in? I think not, call clarity is not available if we are expecting a visitor, and for the unexpected, you are placing us liable for allowing them access to the airport.

The County Council Members are proposing to discuss the 24-hour gate policy on February 24<sup>th</sup>. This discussion will take information gleaned from the airport survey into direct consideration of their actions. Therefore, I feel it is my duty to remind you and the Council of the basic defects of this survey:

- This, like any other survey, asks questions giving multiple choice answers. The questions concerning the security of the airports does not have a good range of answers available, and no place for comments. Additionally, this survey does not delineate the differences between the 24-hour gate policy in effect at Thun Field (soon to be imposed on Tacoma Narrows Airport) and actual security.
- The invitation to take the survey was via email (to those that had opted-in as interested parties to receive airport related information) and by posters at the drive through gates. Several of my customers that rent directly from the airports for their aircraft storage had no idea the survey was available for taking, as they were not on 'the interested parties list' – some of them unaware such list existed – or during the dead of winter, didn't happen to go to the airport to read posters at the gates. There was no U S Mail notification to those that pay their storage fees by mail. I or others that have looked find no indication on the airport and ferries website offering an invitation to participate in the survey. This is a selective invitation, at best.

In summation, I point out that this 24-hour gate policy was poorly conceived and applied, and the data mining be used to support this gate policy is incomplete.

With all due respect, Ms McCarthy, I request you to instruct the Director of Public Works and Utilities to return the gate policy to the previous dusk-to-dawn timing that served the county well for many years. It is with the same respect that I encourage you to find an airport administrator that will take into account the true and honest feelings of the business folks, employers, voters and taxpayers of the county when it comes to setting airport policy, and this administrator would then consider their own thoughts may not always the best idea. If additional time for the gates to be closed is contemplated, I encourage the discussion and compromise approach you previous advocated.

I also call upon the business leaders at both Thun Field and Tacoma Narrows Airport to share their thoughts with you, as well as attend the proposed February 24<sup>th</sup> EID committee meeting for the gate discussion, noting there is not yet a confirmation on the date and time on the Council's calendar.

Sincerely,

Michael Thompson  
AVSTAR Aircraft of Washington, Inc.

**From:** Michael E. Thompson [<mailto:avstarair@att.net>]

**Sent:** Saturday, February 07, 2015 3:03 PM

**To:** 'Deb Wallace'; 'brian.ziegler@co.pierce.wa.us'

**Subject:** Phone call follow-up answer.

Deb;

First, I would like to state that the names above are the only recipients of this email, there are no BCCs, this is strictly between you, me and your supervisor.

Thank you for the phone call yesterday afternoon; apparently, with my pointing out the invitation to the survey did not reach me or others, it unveiled a computer glitch that is on its way to being corrected. No need to thank me for that.

As you tried to end the conversation, I asked if you were willing to take up Ms McCarthy's suggestion that the gate operational times be negotiated to a compromise. You stated that you , once again, do not answer to the TFAC. I stated that I came to you as a private businessman to discuss this, and you asked when. I sat down today and made a list of those times; without much research, I came up with five personal requests from myself, two from other private citizens that I personally witnessed, once from the TFAC, once from a County Council Member, and lastly the one Friday morning from the County Executive.

I would be happy to provide you with that list, but out of respect for Mr. Ziegler and Ms McCarthy having asked me to tone down a bit, I am not going to volunteer it.

Therefore, I will ask you again: are you and your staff willing to sit down with business owners to constructively discuss and find a solution (compromise) to the 24-hour gate policy that was put into place? I would suggest a neutral central location to both airports as this affects both airports, and invite business owners / operators to attend.

I hope that at this point, you would agree this is a prudent thing to do.

Regards,

Michael Thompson  
AVSTAR Aircraft of Washington, Inc.