

The Connecticut General Assembly



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CONTACT: Lawrence B. Cook
(860) 240-8609

LEGISLATORS PUSH FOR CREATION OF BRADLEY AIRPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ZONE

HARTFORD – Top legislators on the Commerce and Transportation committees, state representatives, and Bradley International Airport-area town officials made a public push today for a popular bill that would expand and strengthen the membership and powers of the Bradley International Airport Board of Directors, and create tax incentives for a business-friendly “Bradley International Airport Development Zone” in the towns of East Granby, Suffield, Windsor and Windsor Locks.

State Sen. Gary D. LeBeau (D-East Hartford), who is Senate Chairman of the Commerce Committee; **Sen. Donald J. DeFronzo (D-New Britain)**, who is Senate Chairman of the Transportation Committee, and **Sen. L. Scott Frantz (R-Greenwich)**, who is Ranking Member of both the Transportation and Commerce committees and is the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bradley International Airport, spoke today in favor of Senate Bill 154, “An Act Concerning the Administration of Bradley International Airport.”

The bill has already been approved by five legislative committees (Transportation, Commerce, Government Administration and Elections, Finance, Planning and Development) by a combined vote total of 128-5, for a 96% approval rating, and is now on the Senate calendar awaiting action.

“This is exactly the kind of legislation we should be enacting right now,” **Sen. LeBeau** said. “It lays the groundwork for a future economic rebound, and it will make Bradley International Airport the economic driver for the State of Connecticut that it should be.”

“Bradley Airport is Connecticut’s most active commercial airport and is the second-busiest airport in New England, right behind Logan in Boston,” **Sen. DeFronzo** said. “Building an enterprise zone around Bradley gives us the unique opportunity to capitalize on the transport capabilities offered by this state-owned airport and offer incentives to businesses to build operations in surrounding communities. Further, expanding the Bradley Board of Directors will give the airport more autonomy and greater ability to continue to rebuild itself as a premiere transportation hub.”

If approved, the reconstitution of the Bradley board would take effect July 1, and the Bradley Airport Development Zone would begin October 1.

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Colorado, Indiana and Wisconsin (among other states) have similar airport development zones, offering such business incentives as inventory, lender, and corporate and personal income tax credits. And the National Council of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org) has noted that “the link between airports and economic development is clear, and airport development is more than simply a transport service to the aviation user community. Airports and aviation have a positive economic effect on the cities and counties in which they are located and on neighboring communities.”

According to the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research, Connecticut’s proposed bill:

- designates the towns of Windsor Locks, Suffield, East Granby, and Windsor as the “Bradley Airport Development Zone” and gives businesses within the zone the same benefits that businesses in an enterprise zone receive.
- reconstitutes and expands the Bradley International Airport Board of Directors by adding two additional members appointed by the governor;
- expands the board’s authority and its autonomy from the Department of Transportation (DOT); and

The bill designates 84 census tracts within the towns of East Granby, Suffield, Windsor and Windsor Locks as the “Bradley Airport Development Zone.” It gives businesses located in the zone the same benefits that businesses in an ‘enterprise zone’ receive under state law. An ‘enterprise zone’ under state law is a designated Targeted Investment Community. Incentive benefits are provided for eligible business relocation or expansion projects within the zone. Eligible businesses include manufacturers, warehouse distributors (new construction or expansion only), and certain service-related businesses.

Two of the primary benefits of a Bradley Airport Development Zone would be:

- a five-year, 80% abatement of local property taxes on all qualifying real and personal property that are new to the grand list of the municipality as a direct result of a business relocation, expansion, or renovation project, and;
- a 10-year, 25% or 50% credit on that portion of the Connecticut Corporate Business Tax that is directly attributable to the business relocation, expansion or renovation project as determined by the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services.

The bill also expands the Bradley International Airport Board of Directors from seven to nine members by adding two additional private sector members appointed by the governor. And while the current Bradley board is empowered to develop (in consultation with the DOT) an organizational and management structure that best accomplishes the goals of the airport, this bill eliminates that requirement. The bill empowers the board to approve significant contracts relating to airport operations, select consultants directly rather than only those recommend by the DOT, and streamlines their competitive bidding procedure for construction contractors, airport vendors, and other professional services.

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