

New Geneva airport terminal faces opposition

A plan to build a new 350-million-franc terminal at Geneva's airport is facing opposition from environmentalists and community groups.

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The east wing terminal, known in French as “l’Aile est” is scheduled to be finished by 2016, to accommodate jumbo jets and other large planes.

Groups such as the WWF, the Geneva Green party and associations for neighbourhoods next to the airport are slamming the proposal, saying it will boost air traffic and air pollution.

“This will allow the airport to expand traffic, the number of (plane) movements, which will impact harder again on our region,” Yvan Rochat, executive municipal councillor for the nearby municipality of Vernier, is quoted as saying by the Tribune de Genève.

The Noé21 association, another one of the groups against the new terminal, noted that consumption of kerosene, the aviation fuel, increased 78 percent at the airport between 2000 and 2011.

The group claims that is wiping out environmental efforts elsewhere to reduce air pollution in the Geneva region.

Other opponents believe that low-cost airlines are flourishing at the expense of passenger rail and that higher airport taxes should be levied to offset the increased carbon dioxide emissions.

Management at the airport, however, maintain the new terminal is not planned to boost traffic.

“This will not create traffic, the growth is already there,” airport spokesman Bertrand Stämpfli told the Tribune de Genève.

The terminal is meant to improve the comfort of passengers and to improve facilities for planes prior to takeoff and after landing, Stämpfli indicated.

“Our role, defined by the Confederation (federal administration), is to welcome the traffic that is existing in good conditions,” he said.

“That will indeed generate CO2 but we must remember that we are pursuing one of the most focused energy policies in the canton.”

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