



Kansas City Airport Stumbles Along

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By: *Patrick Tuohey*

One year ago, Steve Vockrodt of *The Kansas City Star* wrote [an excellent piece on the “original sin”](#) of the airport’s new terminal effort. Among his findings was that the then-director of the Aviation Department, Mark VanLoh, did not know that Missouri law required a public vote on airport bonds. It may have been that ignorance of the need for public approval that so hampered the campaign. [And what a campaign it was!](#)

Fast forward a year and [Vockrodt writes](#) that the new Aviation Department director, Pat Klein, was unaware of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines on conducting an environmental assessment. He writes,

Klein said there had been an assumption that the city could put out solicitations for certain construction work before the FAA approved an environmental assessment in October, and then signing those contracts shortly afterward.

"What we've been told initially by the FAA is they don't think that's a smart idea," Klein said. "They think we should hold, so we're in discussions with them to do that. That's a three-, four-, five-month lag on our schedule, which could be the difference between summer or winter of 2022."

[Now we learn](#) that even before construction has begun, the project's opening is being delayed 11 months to October 2022 and will cost much more than originally planned. Delays and increased costs such as these are not surprising for such large projects. After all, the Aviation Department itself has been [all over the map on costs](#) for years. Changes in costs and timelines can be forgiven. Not knowing FAA rules on construction suggest a deeper problem of management.

The Kansas City Star editorial board [rightly called](#) for more transparency in the construction of the new airport terminal. The Show-Me Institute has also called repeatedly for more transparency in the airport process [since 2013](#), when the Council first took up the matter.

It's difficult to be confident that the City will suddenly adopt a position in favor of transparency after years during which the process was opaque. We remain confident, however, given the Aviation Director's unfamiliarity with FAA guidelines, that transparency remains the highest need.

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- [KCI](#)

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