

# FAA Head Briefed On Truman Airport Plan

## ★ Declines To Give Opinion On Project

Dr. John McLucas, administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, declined to express an opinion yesterday on the chances for federal aid for St. Thomas airport improvements.

McLucas met with Virgin Islands political and civic leaders yesterday for a 1 1/2-hour briefing by engineers on the proposed plan for airport facilities.

At the end of the briefing, the administrator made brief remarks to the group in which he said that the presentation had been a good one but that the FAA would be looking closely at the economics of the situation.

The interisland dispute over whether to commit approximately \$10 million in local funds for the project surfaced after McLucas asked if there is local consensus on the need for the airport.

St. Thomas Senators Lloyd Williams and Eric Dawson both said there is agreement that the improvements are

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DESCRIBING RUNWAY improvements planned for Truman Airport is Greiner Engineering official Richard Houry. Houry was assisted in presentation to FAA administrator Dr. John McLucas by Alton Adams Jr. (Daily News Photo-Jaffe)

## Plan

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needed although they did say there is some opposition on St. Croix.

Noting that the interisland commercial rivalry has a 200-year history, businessman Isidor Paiewonsky then pointed to the territory-wide benefits that would accrue from airport expansion.

St. Croix businessman Ted Dale, a member of the Port Authority board, then rose to say that he did not know of "a single Crucian" who is in favor of the project and said he does not now intend to vote for it.

Williams responded by pointing out that legislation to set aside \$2 million a year for the project was drafted by himself and St. Croix Sen. Alexander Moorhead, who voted for it.

Philip Swatek, regional FAA director, pointed out that competition for federal assistance for airport construction is keen with his Miami office already besieged by appeals for Atlanta, Miami and other southeastern cities.

Richard Houry, of Greiner Engineering Sciences Inc., the Port Authority's consulting firm, made the presentation of the plan to McLucas, assisted by Alton Adams Jr.

Houry noted that projected growth in air arrivals would render valueless any shuttle service plan. St. Croix opponents have suggested that jet flights land at Hamilton Airport with St.

Thomas-bound passenger brought over in small shuttle planes.

With a projection of 200,000 passengers a year arriving by 1980, the presentation maintained, a one-runway airport would be inadequate to handle the greater number of arrivals and departures by smaller aircraft such as service would demand.

Houry also said slight adjustments to the runway plans had brought a statement from Eastern Airlines that they would be able to provide direct service to and from Miami with their three-engine, wide-body L-1011 jets.

Heretofore, it had been felt that turnaround service with three-engine jumbo jets, such as the L-1011 and DC-10, would not be possible to the proposed airport because aircraft must have a certain amount of room to maneuver if they lose one engine on takeoff.

Such a loss to a three-engine jet would mean a 33 per cent power drop while a four-engine plane, such as a 707 or DC-8, would experience only a 25 per cent loss. Houry said American Airlines still says they will have to refuel their DC-10's at St. Croix or San Juan.

Richard Doumeng, president of the St. Thomas-St. John Hotel Association, told McLucas that St. Croix hoteliers have backed the proposal because of the overall good it would do the hotel industry in the territory.

He was joined by Houry and Dawson, as well as George Elbe, St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of

Commerce president, in emphasizing to McLucas the importance of the airport to St. Thomas' tourism-dependent economy.