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Regional airline slams airport proposal

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The Bega Valley Shire Council's plans for Merimbula Airport on the New South Wales far south coast have been slammed for being out of touch with reality.

The council is canvassing ideas to extend the runway and redevelop the facility to attract larger aircraft and competitive airfares.

The airline servicing the area, Regional Express, says the airport is already charging above the carrier's head tax average, and a proposed increase could see the service scrapped.

The General Manager of Network Strategy and Sales, Warwick Lodge, says the region's low passenger numbers do not justify the plans.

"We've been communicating and consulting with the Bega Valley Shire since mid-2010," he said.

"Their draft plan was published around mid-2011, and a lot of that earlier consultation from Rex hasn't been taken into account.

"The Saab 340 operated by Rex operates quite comfortably with 1600m of runway length."

The Bega Valley Shire Council has declined to comment at this stage.