

2022

**Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission Report to Legislative
Transportation Committees**

Washington State Department of Transportation

10/15/2022

Introduction

Per SSB 5370 (2019), as revised by SSB 5165 (2021), the following report is provided as the third report to the Legislature from the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC). At the onset, it is important to note that as a result of legislative action in 2022, the timeline for the Commission’s work was extended to June 15, 2023.

I. Executive Summary

The primary purpose of this report is to address the assigned task from legislation for the Commission to recommend the top two locations for the site of a new primary commercial aviation facility by October 15, 2022. In keeping with the intent of the legislation, but given the complex nature of this work, during the September 2022 Commission meeting voting members approved a recommendation supporting its adopted strategy to add capacity at existing airports while continuing to develop a greenfield option.

The Commission’s recommendations include:

- Add capacity to Paine Field according to its Airport Master Plan (with potential for additional capacity), assume Sea-Tac (SEA) executes its Sustainable Airport Master Plan (SAMP), and assist other airports interested in pursuing regional commercial service (distributed air service supported by emerging technology), and
- Continue to develop greenfield site options with a two (2) runway configuration.

The three greenfield sites requiring further analysis include:

- Pierce County East – located south of Puyallup, 4.5 miles east of JBLM, south of Graham
- Pierce County Central – located 2.25 miles south of JBLM, east of Roy and McKenna
- Thurston County Central – located east of Olympia, the southern portion overlaps the westernmost portion of JBLM land

II. Strategy development and adoption

The Commission has adopted a resilient strategy focused on a system solution. It provides options within options. It continues the analysis on the greenfield options of Pierce County East, Pierce County Central and Thurston County Central and it pursues an “Airport of the Future” approach that addresses harmful emissions and noise.

Previous work by the Commission revealed that existing airports would be unable to meet the projected demand. In keeping with its earlier adopted strategy, the Commission reaffirmed its resilient approach to seek additional capacity in existing airports and to continue its work to identify a feasible new airport ‘greenfield’ site.

III. Interface between the CACC and the Aviation System Plan

The Aviation System Plan study, separate but parallel, and similar to the CACC’s work, will be conducting in-depth, technical analysis on the greenfield sites including these next steps:

- Airspace review – with assistance from the FAA
- Air cargo analysis
- Additional environmental factor analysis
- Transportation/access analysis
- Infrastructure analysis
- Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) cost estimates

This analysis will be crucial to providing Commission Members with more detailed knowledge about the sites.

The recommendations of the Commission recognize the complex parameters for viable solutions. The population density of the Puget Sound region is estimated to be around 4.5 million residents. While future growth is unclear given work/life balance shifts recognized during the pandemic, indications are the region population will continue to grow, and with that, a need for increased air transportation; both passengers and freight.

The Washington Aviation System Plan (WASP) consultant identified a 2050 unmet passenger need of 27 Million Annual Passengers (MAP). The passengers originate from across the region from as far north as Skagit County to as far south as Lewis County. By the very nature of their geographical dispersion, a one-size-fits-all solution may not be the best choice. Hence, the Commission's strategy is to provide air passenger service capacity in multiple locations. In essence, the Commission is recommending a three-site solution. While the future capacity of Paine Field in Snohomish County is unknown, similar airports in other metropolitan areas across the nation have demonstrated their ability to accommodate a meaningful portion of their region's travel needs, and we believe we can expect similar growth opportunities at Paine Field according to its airport master plan. This may provide additional capacity for Skagit, Snohomish, and north King counties for the foreseeable future.

Sea-Tac airport continues to work to meet passenger and shipper needs. The airport is likely to remain the flagship airport for the region, and airport plans can be expected to optimize capacity for passengers and freight into the 2030s.

A greenfield site thus becomes an important part of the overall solution. Of the 27 MAP forecast need, this site may be called upon, over time, to provide capacity to support up to 20 MAP. In addition to air passenger service, air cargo for the region may rely heavily on this new location. While it is reasonable to anticipate both Sea-Tac and Paine Field airports will support air cargo needs, the volume of estimated freight, roughly 800,000 metric tons will likely overwhelm their capabilities. Hence, the new airport site will be important to industry and the economic vitality of the region.

The Commission also recognizes the need for air transportation at other locations across the state. Over the last decade the state has experienced a contraction of air service, especially to many central and eastern Washington communities. In addition, communities in western Washington continue to grow, and travelers and shippers seek air transportation solutions to meet their needs. For these reasons, the Commission also recommends supporting airports across the state seeking to initiate or expand regional air transportation service.

All of these recommendations nest with three overarching objectives:

1. Provide accessible and equitable air transportation for all.
2. Transform air transportation in Washington state away from fossil-fuels to more sustainable forms of aircraft propulsion, such as hydrogen and hybrid-electric or all-electric.
3. Embrace and accelerate the adoption of emerging aviation technologies.

IV. Next Steps

With these objectives in mind, the Commission's recommendations in this report lay the foundation for its final report in 2023. The Commission envisions a gradual transformation of air transportation. Capacity should align with demand, providing additional capacity just-in-time to meet demand but not building until realistic expectations demonstrate the need to do so. Hence, capacity begins with Sea-Tac executing its Sustainable Airport Master Plan [(SAMP) Note: the SAMP is a work in process and has not been approved]. In parallel, the Commission recommends priority and funding to support Paine Field planning and construction to meet anticipated demand through gradual increases in capacity according to its airport master plan. In concert with both of these efforts, is the need to begin planning for a new airport in the south Puget Sound area. A new airport of this size and scale can be expected to take 20 years to deliver. Hence, work would need to begin soon to meet the anticipated capacity constraints both at Sea-Tac and Paine Field by the early 2040s. While the Commission recognizes a single runway at this new airport would be sufficient at the onset, if growth projections hold true, a second runway would be needed within a few years; hence land acquisition for both should be part of the new airport program.

These recommendations address the function, but there are other important factors we cannot ignore. Air quality and noise around airports have been proven in numerous studies to be harmful to the people who live and work under the aircraft flight paths. The Commission is not recommending the creation of a new airport that mimics these impacts. Rather, the Commission recommends an airport of the future; an airport that integrates an array of emission and noise reduction measures. In the near term, one of the more important methods to address is to fund the development of infrastructure to produce and distribute Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) also known as bio-jet fuel. While SAF is not the ultimate solution, it is a critical bridging strategy to reduce emissions and the harmful effects of commercial aviation. For the state to fully benefit from SAF, regional production of SAF will be required across the nation so that both arriving and departing aircraft are fueled with SAF. In parallel with this effort, the Commission also recommends a concerted effort by the state, in collaboration with federal and industry partners, to accelerate the adoption of alternative aircraft propulsion systems such as electric, hybrid electric and hydrogen. These have the potential to be the ultimate solution, however these industries are in their infancy and need to come to scale as quickly as possible to address GhG and global warming concerns along with harmful aircraft emissions. Particular to addressing noise, the Commission will also consider actions legislators could take in working with an airport sponsor and the FAA to implement a Community Benefits Agreement.

Over the next several months, the Aviation System Plan consultant will continue in-depth, technical analysis on these sites, as well as examine general aviation capacity needs. At this time, the Commission

does not have enough technical data to provide a single preferred location recommendation. The data that emerges will inform the Commission's deliberations, and the Commission will report back to the legislature recommendations based on the information obtained.

Appendix A

I. Current Members and Position

Voting Members

Jeffrey Brown	9/27/2019 – present	Representative of commercial service airports and ports – county with a population of two million or more
Stroud Kunkle	8/19/2019 – present	Representative of commercial service airports and ports – Port in eastern WA with a runway of at least 13,500' in length
Lawrence Krauter	10/24/2019 – present	Representative of commercial service airports and ports – Commercial service airport in eastern WA located in a county with a population of 400,000 or more
James Kuntz	8/19/2019 – present	Representative of commercial service airports and ports – Association of ports
Shane Jones	9/30/2019 – present	Representative from the airline industry and private sector
Lorin Carr	12/29/2021 – present	Representative from the airline industry and private sector
Andrea Goodpasture	10/15/2019 – present	Representative from the airline industry and private sector
Mark Englizian	9/30/2019 – present	Citizen representative from eastern Washington
Steve Edmiston	8/19/2019 – present	Citizen representative from western Washington
Thomas Embleton	3/25/2022 – present	Representative from the freight forwarding industry
Arif Ghouse	9/27/2019 – present	Representative from a community organization which understands the impacts of a large commercial aviation facility on a community
Bryce Yadon	8/19/2019 – present	Representative from a statewide environmental organization
Robin Toth	8/19/2019 – present	Representative from the Department of Commerce

David Fleckenstein	8/19/2019 – present	Representative from the Division of Aeronautics (Aviation), Department of Transportation
<u>Non-voting Members</u>		
Warren Hendrickson	9/27/2019 – present	Representative from the WA state Aviation Alliance (WSAA)
Robert Rodriguez	9/27/2019 – present	Representative from the Department of Defense
Senator Jim Honeyford	8/19/2019 – present	Senate member from the two largest caucuses in the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate
Senator Karen Keiser	8/30/2019 – present	Senate member from the two largest caucuses in the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate
Representative Tom Dent	6/19/2019 – present	House of Representatives member from the two largest caucuses, appointed by the Speaker of the House
Representative Tina Orwall	8/19/2019 – present	House of Representatives member from the two largest caucuses, appointed by the Speaker of the House
Robert Hodgman	10/4/2019 - present	Representative from the Division of Aeronautics of the Dept. of Transportation
Lois Bollenback	8/16/2021 – present	Representative from an eastern WA metropolitan planning organization
Jason Thibedeau	7/2/2021 – present	Representative from a western WA metropolitan planning organization
Anthony Bean	9/27/2019 – present	Representative from an eastern WA regional airport
Robert ‘Rudy’ Rudolph	8/19/2019 - present	Representative from a western WA regional airport
Kerri Woehler	10/4/2019 – present	Department of Transportation multi-modal planning

II. Past Members and Position

Spencer Hansen	8/19/2019 – 12/31/2021	Representative from the freight forwarding industry
Sabrina Minshall	8/19/2019 – 12/31/2020	Representative from an eastern WA metropolitan planning organization
Kevin Wallace	1/6/2021 – 8/15/2021	Representative from an eastern WA metropolitan planning organization
Josh Brown	9/27/2019 – 7/1/2021	Representative from a western WA metropolitan planning organization
Joseph Braham	9/30/2019 – 2/7/2022	Representative from the trucking industry