

WSDOT Aviation Monthly Report August 2009

[Pierce County Celebrates Completion of Tacoma Narrows Airport Project](#)

[State Airports Used for Forest Fire Fighting](#)

[WSDOT Planner Attends Meeting in Port Angeles](#)

Pierce County Celebrates Completion of Tacoma Narrows Airport Project

Pierce County officials along with invited guests and members of the public celebrated the completion of the Tacoma Narrows Airport Runway Safety Area project, which includes the new Stone Drive NW tunnel.

A special morning dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony was held followed by an open house on Wednesday, Aug. 5 at the airport. Project engineers from Public Works and Utilities were on hand to answer questions about the project and explain its safety benefits. Several aircraft were on display: a jet, a twin engine aircraft, and an antique aircraft. The Stone Drive NW tunnel opened to traffic in June.



The \$15.5 million construction project involved building a lid over Stone Drive NW at the north end of the airport to provide an emergency landing area for aircraft. The lid had the effect of creating a 530-foot tunnel that increases safety for vehicles and pedestrians as they pass under the airfield.

The elevation of Stone Drive NW had to be lowered to accommodate the tunnel and allow drivers to see farther ahead.

The Federal Aviation Administration required creation of the runway safety area and provided 95 percent of the funds to build it. The remaining five percent was paid by the county, and Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation providing grants for a small portion of the local match.

Pierce County purchased the airport from the City of Tacoma in late 2008 and inherited the project already in progress. With its completion, the runway now complies with FAA safety standards.

State Airports Used for Forest Fire Fighting

As of Thursday, August 6, 2009 fire fighting aircraft and ground crews from around the country are using state-operated airports as bases to stage fire fighting operations. Methow Valley State Airport has three helicopters and one fixed wing based aircraft to support fire fighting operations and crews. Tieton State Airport, which remains closed to the public, has five helicopters with two fixed wing aircraft stationed at the Yakima Airport to handle the Discovery fire. Lake Wenatchee (Fish Lake) has five helicopters. Sullivan Lake is also supporting fire fighting operations.

Aircraft and crews such as Florida's Panhandle Helicopters and Firehawk Helicopters, Oregon's Erikson Helicopters and Swanson Helicopter, and Idaho's Firehawk Helicopters and Hillcrest Helicopters are just a few teams dispatched by the USDA Forest Service to combat the many fires burning in Washington State. Skykomish State Airport has seen crews from Helicopters Express from Atlanta, Georgia and fire fighting crews from Oregon.

State Airport Manager Paul Wolf is working with the USDA Forest Service's Okanogan / Wenatchee Forest Unit Aviation Officer, Steve Baumann, and other unit managers around the state to keep up on fire operations and airport specific needs.

Paul has also been in contact with the National Park Service (NPS) about the potential for using Ranger Creek State Airport for fire incidents occurring on the NE side of the Mount Rainier National Park. So far the NPS has not mobilized to Ranger Creek. Paul is looking at the specific airport based fire fighting operations to determine potential future airport improvement needs. The helicopters accumulate a considerable amount of dust and new airport improvements may prudent to help facilitate dust control. Installing a new water source at Lake Wenatchee State Airport may help to keep the grass growing in some of the bare dirt areas.

WSDOT Planner Attends Meeting in Port Angeles

WSDOT planner Carter Timmerman traveled to Port Angeles to attend two meetings for Ed Carlson Memorial Airport. The first meeting was the TAC meeting reviewing the current and projected development of the airport. In attendance were airport staff, URS consultants, pilots and representatives of both the City of Port Angeles and the Parks Department. Much of the conversation focused on removal of natural growth airspace obstructions, and changes to the local park. The URS consulting staff did an excellent job of creating a conceptual depiction of how the park would benefit from a reduction in trees. One representative from the Parks Department stated that the area previously cleared by the airport is now being used as a Frisbee golf course. The second meeting of the night was an open forum where the public could view and comment on the

methodology, analysis, alternatives and conceptual depiction presented by URS. Turn out for the public meeting was less than anticipated. WSDOT Aviation strongly supports the airport's efforts to increase capacity and remove current and future airspace obstructions.