

WSDOT Aviation Monthly Report February 2006

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Monroe Planning Commission Begins Work on Land Use Compatibility at Firstair Field



Consistent with requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA), the City of Monroe is working to discourage incompatible land uses adjacent to Firstair Field. The planning commission began the process earlier this month with a review of comprehensive plan policies related to airports. Future work will address the zoning code. City planners expect to complete the process with adoption of comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments later this year. Firstair Field is a privately owned, public use airport located within Monroe city limits. The airport has 70 based aircraft and hosts a variety of aviation activities including flight instruction, scenic tours and aerial photography. The Evergreen State Fairgrounds are located immediately adjacent to the airport; other uses near the facility include industrial lands, open space and residential neighborhoods. The planning commission is reviewing the comprehensive plan and considering updates that would protect Firstair Field from incompatible land uses. The commission is contemplating a number of questions as it begins the process of amending its development regulations to discourage incompatible land uses adjacent to the airport:

- What is the role of the city in regulating height hazards near the airport? What is the role of the FAA?
- What is the city's obligation in protecting the airport as an *Essential Public Facility*?
- What types of development are desirable in areas adjacent to the airport?
- What planning tools are available to help the city balance development pressures and its responsibility to discourage incompatible land uses adjacent to Firstair Field?

WSDOT Aviation is working with Monroe to answer these questions and provide additional technical assistance. Staff will give a presentation on WSDOT's *Airports & Compatible Land Use* Program at a planning commission meeting on February 13.

New Aviation Research Money Anticipated to Address Aviation Land Use Crisis

Land use was a primary focus at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) aviation planning meetings in Washington, D.C. last week. Discussions centered on the need to develop new tools to protect airports from incompatible land uses. Washington State and Minnesota have cosponsored a proposal that identifies research necessary to address this emerging issue. WSDOT met with members of its Aviation Advisory Committee requesting that land use be identified as one of aviation's critical research areas. Early discussions indicate this will be a priority, as it supports the work already underway between the states and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop national land use guidelines.

Search Suspended for Missing Cessna 421

An aircraft search, the second in Washington State during the month of January, was suspended after 72 hours of intense operations. Weather was the biggest factor in preventing searchers from locating a Cessna 421 Golden Eagle.



On the afternoon of January 25 the pilot reported needing assistance with routing out of inclement weather. Radar data indicates that the aircraft maneuvered into a steep climbing turn then descended rapidly into the southern Washington Cascade Mountains. The final descent path was calculated at over 280 knots groundspeed, and at 17,000 feet per minute. The area where the plane is believed to be located was covered in snow, with depths of over 7 feet when the search began. Since then between 12-18 inches of snow has accumulated.

The 40 year-old pilot from Scottsdale, AZ was en route to the Tacoma Narrows Airport in Gig Harbor to pick up three passengers. They had planned to fly to San Diego for a weekend birthday celebration. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) records showed that he was unqualified to fly the 700 horsepower high performance twin-engine aircraft, but his flight instructor indicated that he had recently become qualified in November 2005. He did not have an instrument rating, which would allow him to fly in and through the clouds.

After exhausting efforts, which included 60 ground searchers logging over 1,500 hours, both the Skamania County Sheriff and WSDOT Aviation Incident Commander suspended the operation. The search will resume as leads emerge and weather conditions improve. The mission was supported by members of:

- Washington Air Search and Rescue (WASAR)
- Civil Air Patrol (CAP)
- Skamania County Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Clark County SAR
- Silver Star SAR
- Lewis County SAR
- Klickitat County SAR
- Hoodriver County, Oregon SAR
- Oregon Army National Guard, 1042nd Medical Flight from Salem

Long-term Air Transportation Study Moves Forward

Over the last month WSDOT Aviation, the FAA and selected consultant, SH&E, Inc. have been working on finalizing a public communication/outreach plan and scope of work for Phases I and II

of the air transportation study. Next week, the communication plan will be posted on WSDOT Aviation's Web site for a 10-day public comment period. It is anticipated that the final scope will be ready for an independent review within the next few weeks.

The air transportation study was initiated through Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5121 and is for the purposes of evaluating air transportation issues for commercial and general aviation airports statewide. High-speed rail will also be evaluated as part of the study. The majority of the work is funded by the FAA and will occur in three phases:

- Phase I will include an assessment of existing airport facilities, air cargo, passengers, and air space capacity for general aviation and commercial airports. Phase I is required to be completed by July 1, 2006.
- Phase II will include a market needs assessment and forecast. Phase II is required to be completed by 2007.
- Phase III will include the formation of a ten-member aviation advisory council.

Phases I and II are currently funded within the 2005-2007 budget.