

MEETING NOTES

OPEN HOUSE - 3:00 P.M to 3:20 P.M

An Open House was held at the beginning of the meeting. Project figures were displayed including the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

AIRPORT LAYOUT PLAN

PROJECT UPDATE PRESENTATION – 3:20 P.M to 5:00 P.M.

1. Introductions – The meeting was opened by Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division (WSDOT Aviation) Director, John Sibold. WSDOT Aviation manages 16 airports across Washington and owns seven of those airports. The Methow Valley State Airport is the largest of the state-owned airports and is the only airport included in the federal system. As part of the federal system or NPIAS, the FAA requires the owner to periodically update the Airport Layout Plan for the airport. The airport layout planning process reviews the current facilities and future facilities necessary to meet the demand at the airport over the next twenty years.

This meeting is a follow up to the meeting held on March 19th that outlined the preliminary development alternatives. He stated that WSDOT Aviation has received a lot of comments since the last meeting and wanted to come back out and show a revised alternative that takes into account many of the comments we received.

Director Sibold stressed that this is a planning process for the Aviation Division to consider options and receive comment on the options. Many comments have been received. The comments have included, do not impact Craig Boesel's farmland, do not expand the airport to increase jet traffic, find a cost effective solution to deal with Evans Road, and leave the airport as it is. He stated that the project team has heard the comments and made changes accordingly and introduced David Miller from Century West Engineering to talk more about the process, the comments received, and the Preliminary Preferred Alternative that was developed based on the comments.

David Miller, Senior Aviation Planner with Century West Engineering provided background on the project prior to beginning the formal PowerPoint presentation. The planning process for an Airport Layout Plan usually takes about a year. We began more than a year ago with the initial data collection and inventory for the project. Due to additional research that was required to determine property ownership and easements at the airport, the timeline has stretched out longer than is typical.

It was only at the March 19th meeting when we presented the Preliminary Alternatives depicting potential development at the airport has there been a real opportunity for public review and comment. The steps leading up to the alternatives are mainly intended to identify the existing conditions at the

airport and develop the forecast for the 20 year planning period that will be used to identify facility needs over the planning period. At the March 19th meeting we presented the Preliminary Alternatives that began the discussion. Since then we have received many comments and refined the Preliminary Alternatives and incorporated those elements into the Preliminary Preferred Alternative that we will be presenting today.

2. Role of Methow Valley State Airport in Washington's Aviation System

The Methow Valley State Airport is included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems or NPIAS. The NPIAS identifies more than 3,400 existing and proposed airports (nationwide) that are significant to national air transportation and thus eligible to receive Federal grants under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The closest NPIAS airports to Methow Valley State are Omak and Pangborn Memorial in Wenatchee. Twisp Municipal Airport is not included in the NPIAS and is not eligible for FAA funding.

The USFS North Cascades Smoke Jumper Base is another critical user of the airport. It is strategically located for the USFS operations and serves most of Washington. It is also a major contributor to the local economy in addition to its value as a key USFS facility.

The airport also serves as a key emergency transportation facility. It is used routinely by Medivac operators, which is important due to the remote location of the Methow Valley.

3. FAA Funding and Design Standards

FAA funding is available to airports in the NPIAS through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). AIP funding is a dedicated fund that is generated from aircraft user fees and can only be used for a narrowly defined group of eligible Aviation related projects. Airports in the NPIAS are eligible for up to \$150,000 per year in general aviation "non-primary entitlement" (NPE) grants. These grants can be rolled over for up to 4 years and require a 5% local match. If the funds are not used within four years, they revert back to the general aviation fund. In addition to NPE grants, there are Discretionary Grants available for high priority projects on a limited basis.

The FAA requires an FAA approved Airport Layout Plan to ensure that projects to be completed with Federal funding comply with design standards. The FAA design standards are based on activity and forecasts and are determined by the Design Aircraft, or family grouping of similar aircraft. The Design Aircraft is defined as the most demanding aircraft that uses an airport and has at least 500 take offs and landings annually. Based on the US Forest Service, Medivac, private and commercial turboprop and business jet activity at the Methow Valley State Airport, the applicable standards are FAA Airplane Design Group II (ADG II) and Aircraft Approach Category B for Runway 13/31.

There is a prevalent misconception that planning at Methow Valley State has been driven by one large business jet. This is not the case. The Tice Gulfstream III is classified as a CII aircraft and is more demanding than the aircraft used to determine the design standards, but does not have the necessary activity levels to be the Design Aircraft.

4. FAA Airport Layout Plan Process

The planning process to develop an Airport Layout Plan is defined by the FAA and has a number of specific elements that are the same for planning at all airports. The scale and level of detail changes based on the size, use, and activity of the airport, but the basic elements remain the same. The planning process includes the following elements:

- **Inventory** - document and evaluate existing facilities and conditions
- **Forecasts** - define current activity and project future aviation activity through the twenty-year planning period including: based aircraft, aircraft operations, the design aircraft (current/future), and the specific activity breakdowns (peaking, aircraft fleet mix, etc.).
- **Facility Requirements** - translate forecast demand into specific facility requirements and evaluate the airfield's conformance to FAA design standards including: airside - runway length and taxiways, landside - aircraft parking and hangars, lighting and navigational aids, airfield pavement, and other items including the need for an FBO, fuel storage, security, utilities, and roadways.
- **Airport Development Alternatives** - create options for developing new facilities to meet forecast demand and facility requirements.

Desired Outcomes of the Planning Process – The main goals that were set for the planning process include:

- Maintaining the airport's current aeronautical capabilities and accommodate future needs, while meeting FAA standards.
- Creating an effective improvement program that establishes clear priorities that are financially feasible.
- Upgrading airport features based on safety needs, technology, etc.
- Minimizing impacts on surrounding property owners and neighbors.

It should be stressed that this is a plan for the next 20 years. There is no emergency and the improvements depicted will be completed as demand requires and funding is available.

5. Work Completed to Date

We are currently about half way or a little more than half way through the planning process. We have completed the Inventory, Forecast, and Facility Requirements and based on the needs identified, prepared the draft preliminary alternatives. The alternatives were presented at the last meeting, and we'll go through that in more detail. Since the last meeting we have received comments and refined the alternatives based on the input we have received. The Preliminary Preferred Alternative that we have presented today reflects the progression of those refinements.

6. Key Conformance Issues

The main conformance issue for the configuration of the runway ends is the proximity of Evans Road. All of the runway changes are driven by issues related to conformance with FAA standards. The FAA's highest priorities to enhance airport safety; **Clear Approaches to Runway Ends** – Unobstructed approaches (FAR Part 77 or through use of FAA Alternative Threshold Siting Criteria), the **Runway Safety Area (RSA)** - Standard dimensions, surface gradient, surface condition (no objects > 3" above grade unless frangible) along the sides and beyond the ends of the runway, the **Obstacle Free Zone (OFZ)** – Standard dimensions without physical obstructions along the sides and beyond the ends of the runway, the **Primary Surface** – Unobstructed flat surface along the sides and beyond the ends of the runway, and the **Object Free Area (OFA)** - Standard dimensions without physical obstructions along the sides and beyond the ends of the runway.

7. Alternatives Analysis

At the March 19th meeting we presented the three preliminary alternatives for reconfiguring the runway and one alternative for landside improvements. In Alternative 1, Evans Road remains as is in its current location and the runway is shifted to the north to satisfy all of the FAA requirements for protected areas and surfaces. This cost for this option are high and the impact to adjacent property is also high.

In Alternative 2, Evans Road is closed along the south end of the runway and relocated to the north. We have found through refinements since the March 19th meeting that no runway shift would be required with this option. We heard a lot of comments about the various alignments. We heard that the bridge idea is a bad idea.

Based on conversations and input at the March 19th meeting and comments received, the new access to the north has been refined. We learned a lot about how Craig Boesel used and irrigated his property. We understand that running a road through the middle of his property would make

it unfarmable. We subsequently developed an alignment that runs along the perimeter of his farmland.

Alternative 3 shows shortening the runway to fully comply with FAA standards without relocating the roadway or extending to the north. The resulting runway length is a runway around 3000 feet long that is too short to accommodate the USFS operations and if implemented could lead the Forest Service to relocate to airports with more appropriate facilities.

The Landside Alternative showed various hangar and development options. Based on input received about impact to adjacent properties, these were not included in the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, but if an adjacent property owner was interested in selling, the Aviation Division would be interested in discussing it.

8. Summary of Comments Received on Alternatives

The Aviation Division has received a lot of comments over the last month. The following is a brief summary of the comments received:

- For all Alternatives, the impact to adjacent agricultural land should be minimized
- Roadway alignments should avoid agricultural land and be as economical as possible
- Evans Road should remain as is and signals should be installed to stop traffic
- The jet traffic is disruptive to the Valley
- USFS, NW Medstar, Aero Methow have all commented that the existing runway length is necessary for their ongoing operations
- Maintain the Status Quo
- Do not seek Federal Funding
- Seek other alternatives
- The forecasts are too high

9. Preliminary Preferred Alternative

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative represents the progression from the preliminary alternatives based on the input we have received. The runway safety area standards can be met within the existing airport property with no impact to the Boesel property other than the relocation of Evans Road. This will require slight modifications of the threshold locations, but allows for a runway length compatible with current aircraft operations.

This process will not unfold overnight. The projects identified will be completed over time and will involve a dialog with effected property owners.

In the interim additional analysis will be necessary to configure the runway to provide interim modifications to improve safety.

The parallel taxiway is shown as a place holder for future improvements. It could be constructed in sections to allow the USFS time to relocate the buildings identified. It is in no way the intent to show improvements that would make the Forest Service want to relocate their Smoke Jumper operations from the airfield.

As far as landside improvements are concerned, there are no off airport hangar or apron development projects identified. The landside options are limited to optimizing what land is available on the current airport property.

10. Q & A - Comments

Note: This is a summary of comments. The intent of the comments is meant to be conveyed, but this is not a verbatim transcript of the comments.

Okanagan County Commissioner, Bud Hover, asked if WSDOT has the ability to force the vacation of a County Road if Okanagon County says no to the proposal. John Sibold stated that if that were required they would enter into discussions with the County to identify a solution. If it can't be relocated, we need to develop a plan to mitigate the safety concerns.

Verlene Hughes with Okanagon County Public Works stated that both roads potentially impacted have an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 140+. The County has concerns over doing away with these roads.

"Why are we doing this?" I show up to these meetings and see pictures with roads through my yard. How many accidents have there actually been between aircraft and cars on Evans Road? If you build it they will come and the IFR approach and lights on all the time will encourage night traffic. The Tice and Nordstrom family jets are very loud and disruptive.

Last summer there were five large jets staged on the airport. I thought I lived across from the Smoke Jumper base, not SeaTac.

I care about the environmental impact of the proposed plan. There has been no mention of an Environmental Impact Statement. You don't have to use the money just because its there. Use it elsewhere where jobs are needed.

David Miller Response: There is not an environmental component to this planning process. Every project shown will have an environmental process that is lead by the FAA as the lead Federal agency. There will be further opportunity for public comment at that time.

Is the airport for visual landing or is there an instrument approach?

John Sibold Response: The airport operates under Visual Flight Rules (VFR). We do not have an instrument approach. A precision approach is likely not feasible due to the terrain around the airport.

Is this driven by FAA rules or by the activity of AII and BII aircraft? What are the counts of AII and BII aircraft in the last five years? Are they based on what is happening now or what will happen in 20 years?

John Sibold Response: Because we use FAA funding to maintain the existing facilities at the airport the FAA requires us to address safety issues like any other transportation facility. It is similar to the way we have to improve our highway facilities as standards change over time.

David Miller Response: Because this is a non-towered airport there are no definitive counts of activity. We have developed estimates based on the best available data and through contacting the known users of the airport to get the best information we can. We estimate about 380 USFS operations annually and about 190 other AII and BII aircraft for around 600 operations a year. The estimates are for current activity at the airport. The estimate for activity at the end of the 20 year planning period is approximately 800-900 operations annually.

When did the FAA change the standards driving this change?

David Miller Response: The standards were developed and put in place in the 1960's and 1970's and have been updated many times since then. Emphasis is place on certain standards focused mainly on safety. The Runway Safety Area (RSA) standards are the FAA's top priority and was placed at the top by Congressional Mandate based on several high profile accidents that ended in fatalities where RSA standards were not fully met.

There is a \$1M plus project to pipe the irrigation canal at the south end of the runway. It shows continued access from Evans Road. This project should be coordinated with these plans.

To relocate Evans Road and skirt the edge of Craig's property takes the same amount of property. We need to maintain the high value agricultural land in the Valley. You should put your effort into making Evans Road as safe as possible and just get as close as you can to meet standards.

If Evans Road is the issue, why don't you just raise the runway and lower Evans Road?

You are assuming the Forest Service will move buildings over a period of time. We can't get the Forest Service to spend \$5,000 to improve a trail. They are a major employer in the Valley. How will you ensure we don't lose the Smoke Jumper Base?

Is this planning just to accommodate business jets? We do not want to see the airport modified to accommodate larger private aircraft.

David Miller Response: There is no distinction made between private or commercially owned aircraft. The planning is based strictly on the type of aircraft. In this case, the design aircraft or family of aircraft is based mostly on the Smoke Jumper aircraft. Based on the grant assurances entered into over the years when the State accepted FAA grants, the airport must be open for public use.

My main concern is protecting Craig Boesel's land.

Residents are happy with the road the way it is.

How do we make this go away? How can we put together a committee with Director Hammond to stop this? To take out agricultural land that we have tried so hard to preserve will not work. Why are we waiting until now to discuss this. The road location needs to be reviewed and problem solved to come up with a better solution.

John Sibold Response: The road location will not be impacted now. We need to spend more time to analyze it and come up with other alternatives.

The airport should be removed from the NPIAS and kept as it is.

11. Next Steps

- Receive FAA, Planning Advisory Committee, Stakeholder, and Public Comment on Preliminary Preferred Alternative. 30 Day Public Review Period (concludes June 19th). Select the Preferred Alternative (by July 1st).
- Complete the Airport Layout Plan and associated drawings.
- Complete the Capital Improvement Program including all projects identified on the ALP.
- Finalize ALP report and submit final deliverables to FAA for review and comment.
- All future FAA funded development projects require project specific environmental review under the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).