



State Managed Airports Public Outreach and Communication Plan

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation is developing a strategic plan and management procedures for the 17 state-managed airports within Washington State. Of these airports, WSDOT owns eight, leases one, and operates the remaining eight under conditional use permits. It is necessary for WSDOT Aviation to examine the role the state managed airports serve the State's Transportation system. The WSDOT-Managed Airport Study will help WSDOT understand the comparative benefit of investing in these airports versus others in the statewide system.

Project Goals

- Communicate and provide updates to the public on the project, news, events, and management of the airports.
- Define the purpose and role of the state-operated airport system through an independent assessment.
- Conduct a detailed assessment of existing facilities.
- Standardize airport operating agreements.
- Integrate with the current statewide system plan effort LATS.
- Identify management objectives, standards and operating procedures.

Community Involvement and Outreach

- WSDOT's Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) is putting a spotlight on the agency's policy direction for the aviation system. Analysis of the state-managed airport system must be transparent and accountable.
- Several communities and pilot groups are involved with the state-managed airports and feel a sense of ownership over them. It will be necessary to keep these stakeholders informed about the study process and ensure that they have opportunities to provide input.

- The results of this study could influence a shift in policy for WSDOT. Stakeholder involvement is necessary to fully understand potential impacts of policy changes.
- Be proactive and transparent. Establish WSDOT as the first and most reliable source for news and information about the state managed airports.
- Improve safety. Inform the public about projects, events and circumstances surrounding the state managed airports to improve the safety of pilots, aircraft and airport operations, and the general public.

Target audiences

- Aviation News Service – general e-mail list of aviation interests
- Regional Media – media specific to the regions of the 17 state managed airports
- US Forest Service – coordinates with WSDOT on state managed airport projects
- Washington Pilots Association – WPA chapters coordinate with WSDOT on work parties
- Aviation Associations – have interests in preserving aviation assets – includes AOPA, WPA, CAA, WPPA, NBAA, etc.
- Airlift NW – coordinates with WSDOT on emergency operations including training
- NW MedStar – coordinates with WSDOT on emergency operations including training
- Local jurisdictions – coordinates with WSDOT on airport projects, community needs and emergency services activities
- Army Corps of Engineers – coordinates with WSDOT on airport projects and emergency services activities
- WSDOT Maintenance – coordinates with WSDOT Aviation on airport projects
- WSDOT Real Estate – coordinates with WSDOT on airport projects
- Recreational pilots – use the airstrips to take advantage of recreational opportunities

Key messages

- To ensure the safety of pilots, the public and aircraft operations, the state managed airports are primarily opened during summer and closed during winter months. Check the Web site or call Paul Wolf, 360-651-6312, to determine if your state managed airport is open.

- The state managed airports provide strategic landing or staging sites for emergency medical air response, transport, evacuation points and fire fighting.
- In addition to being emergency airfields, the state managed airports also provide remote access into rural communities and offer exceptional recreational opportunities.
- WSDOT is conducting this study because it needs to better understand the role state-managed airports play in the state aviation system.
- The results of this study will be integrated into the Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS), Washington Transportation Plan and will assist in developing WSDOT policy and management procedures.

How will WSDOT achieve these goals?

- **Plan Ahead.** Having proactive and transparent communication with the public requires proper planning. Before every state managed airport project or major event (i.e. major maintenance, construction, airport layout plan update, etc) WSDOT staff must develop a communication plan that clearly identifies:
 - Goals
 - Objectives
 - Target Audiences
 - Key Messages
 - Strategies
 - Budget
 - Timeline
- **Keep Web site updated.** WSDOT leads with the Web; therefore, it is important to ensure that the state managed airport Web pages are checked and updated frequently. The Web pages indicate whether an airport is open or closed, what services it provides, if a project or event is occurring, etc. This is an effective and efficient way to keep the public informed about state managed airport news.
- **Create and maintain stakeholder lists.** Ensure that interested parties are receiving news alerts and encourage participation by creating mailing lists specific to the 17 state managed airports.
- **Highlight roles and uses of state managed airports.** It is important that the public is aware of each state managed airport's role in the regional and statewide transportation system, as well as their various emergency services roles. WSDOT must consistently and continuously communicate the benefits of the state managed airport to increase awareness about their important role in the statewide system and the communities they serve.

Communications tools

- Formation of a study advisory committee (SAC):
 - A technical advisory committee is typically comprised of members within the community, local elected officials or their representatives, planners/engineers, stakeholder groups and agencies, airport businesses, pilots, neighborhood groups, etc. The broad perspectives offered with this type of group can be helpful in informing airport decisions, providing guidance and anticipating risks.
- Educate aviation and community organizations:
 - Effective community outreach must include communicating with and education local aviation and community organizations. This aspect is critical since people who belong to these groups are closely attuned to potential risks, challenges and benefits to airports and communities. WSDOT should provide briefings when possible at community and aviation association meetings.
- Establish an effective public process during airport facility plan updates.
 - Airport facility plans, also known as airport master plans are developed to assist decision makers on future airport maintenance, development and management of the airport. As with any other project or event, it is essential that before any airport layout plan update begins, WSDOT develops a communication plan that outlines the public process for public input. Communication tools within these public processes may include soliciting stakeholder involvement, establishing technical advisory committees, conducting public meetings, creating a project pages on WSDOT's Web site, producing informational mailings, establishing public comment periods, etc.
- Hosting open public meetings and workshops.
 - All public meetings should be planned and announced in advance to ensure the greatest level of participation. WSDOT should make these meetings accessible to the public at large and make accommodations when necessary for special needs.
- Meeting with airport neighbors and businesses.
 - WSDOT must establish good working relationships with airport neighbors and businesses to ensure they are aware of airport projects and can provide feedback.
- Post project information on WSDOT's Web site.
 - WSDOT's state managed airport pages must be updated frequently to reflect airport openings and closures, projects,

news, events, amenities, facilities, activities, etc. WSDOT should promote the Web site as one of the many sources of information about the state managed airports.

- Create a stakeholder mailing list and send project updates, meeting notices, etc.
 - WSDOT should establish stakeholder mailing lists for each airport and produce mailings when necessary to inform people about project or events at each of the airports.
- Contact local media.
 - WSDOT should know the regional media contacts at each of the state managed airports and be proactive and transparent in sharing information and news about the state managed airports. When appropriate WSDOT should submit letters to the editors, contact reporters before sending important news releases, communicate the benefits of the airport to the community, etc.
- Host special events.
 - Airport-sponsored special events are among the best ways to promote aviation in the community. These events can include airport anniversary celebrations, military reserve days, air races, static displays, fly-in breakfasts, dedication of new buildings, youth group activities, career days, student art showings, antique shows, and warbird displays. Proper planning of special events is essential and should include a planning committee, a sponsor, and a small reserve of operating funds. It is also good practice to leverage community involvement through participation of local parent-teacher associations, Civil Air Patrol, the Boy Scouts, etc.

State managed airport contacts

- Paul Wolf, State Managed Airports Manager, 360-651-6313
- John Sibold, WSDOT Aviation Director, 360-651-6301
- Nisha Marvel, WSDOT Aviation Communications, 360-651-6310

Timeline

March 2007	Project kick-off
June 2007	Release of independent assessment
August 2007	Policy and Performance Objectives
September 2007	Study Advisory Committee meets
October 2007	Recommendations for Best Management Practices

(Timeline Continued)

November 2007	First LATS Aviation Planning Council meeting
January 2008	Final draft policy and management strategies completed
April 2008	Public review and Presentation to LATS Aviation Planning Council
July 2008	Aviation Planning Council initiates 30-day public review/comment on draft statewide policies
September 2008	Begin State Managed Airport Handbook
July 2009	Final Aviation Planning Council Recommendations
September 2009	Public Comment State Managed Airport Handbook
November 2009	Final State Managed Airport Handbook

Key Milestones

- April 2006: WSDOT begins LATS Phase I assessment on public use general aviation and commercial service airports statewide. SH&E completes final draft September 2006.
- October 2006: WSDOT begins LATS Phase II Market and Forecast on public use general aviation and commercial service airports statewide. SH&E completes final draft July 2007.
- January 2007: WSDOT begins State-Managed Airport Planning Initiative to study and develop best management practices and implementation strategies for airports owned and operated by WSDOT. The program was initiated as a multi-year project and had four key elements:
 - 1) Background Assessment and Study Analysis of State-Managed Airports.
 - i) Working Paper #1 - Airport Independent Assessment
 - ii) Working Paper #2 - Policies and Performance Objectives
 - iii) Working Paper #3 - Recommendations for Best Management Practices
 - 2) Aviation Planning Council review and integration with the Washington Long-Term Air Transportation System (LATS) and Washington Transportation Plan.
 - i) Washington Aviation System Plan Policies
 - ii) Integration with Airport Classification System and Performance Measures

- 3) State-Managed Airports Handbook
 - i) Management Principles
 - ii) Best Management Practices and Regulations
- 4) Development of Airport Master Plans and Airport Layout Plans

- March 2007: WSDOT initiates independent assessment of state-managed airports. The assessment was conducted by Wilbur Smith Associates.
- May 2007: Independent Assessment forwarded to Washington Aviation Advisory Committee for review and comment.
- June 2007: WSDOT initiates a 30-day public review and comment period on the Independent Assessment for state-managed airports.
- August 2007: Wilbur Smith begins work on Working Paper #2 – Policy and Performance Objectives on State-Managed Airports.
- September – November 2007: Study Advisory Committee meets twice to discuss state-managed airports policy, management objectives and best practices.
- October 2007: Wilbur Smith begins work on Working Paper #3 – Recommendations for Best Management Practices on State-Managed Airports
- November 2007 – July 2009, LATS Aviation Planning Council initiated. Statewide the Council has eleven public meetings, four regional meetings, over 20 summary briefings to interested parties on request, two e-town hall meetings and public survey.
- January 2008: WSDOT completes State-Managed Airport draft policy and management strategies.
- April 2008: WSDOT presentation to Aviation Planning Council on State-Managed Airport Assessment during public meeting at the Museum of Flight on draft policy objectives and best management practices.
- July 2008: Aviation Planning Council (LATS) initiates 30-day public comment period on draft statewide aviation policies.
- July 2008: Aviation Planning Council (LATS) hosts regional public meetings on July 22, 2008 at Mukilteo and July 24, 2008 at Wenatchee to seek public comment on draft statewide aviation policies developed as part of the Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS).
- September 2008: WSDOT authorizes Wilbur Smith to begin developing management handbook for the state-managed airports. The handbook would include best management practices, management procedures and regulations to guide the future management and operations of the 17 state-managed airports.
- December 2008: Aviation Planning Council (LATS) public meeting in Spokane, adopts statewide aviation policies.

- March 2009, Aviation Planning Council (LATS) hosts regional public meetings on March 24, 2009 in Olympia and March 26, 2009 in Spokane to take public comment and input on the statewide aviation system.
- April 2009: Aviation Planning Council (LATS) initiates a 15-minute online survey to take public input on the statewide aviation system. Approximately 1,322 Washington residents were randomly invited statewide using random-digit-dialing (RDD) technology and address-based sampling methods. The survey was conducted by Knowledge Networks April 3-17, 2009 with a 71% participation rate.
- March – April 2009: Aviation Planning Council (LATS) initiates a 40-day public comment period to solicit public comment on aviation system plan alternative strategies. The comment period opened on March 4 through April 17, 2009.
- June 2009: Aviation Planning Council adopts statewide aviation recommendations and policies, which are forwarded to the governor, legislature, Transportation Commission and regional transportation planning organizations on July 1, 2009 pursuant to ESSB 5121.

Next Steps

- September - October 2009: WSDOT will hold a series of public meetings throughout the state to take public comment and input on the draft State Managed Airport Handbook.
- September – October 2009: WSDOT will initiate a 30-day public comment period to take public comment and input on the draft State-Managed Airport Handbook.
- November 2009: Proposed final adoption of State-Managed Airport Handbook.