

Aviation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2020
Webex Meeting

Meeting called to order by Chairman Lee Ryan at 1:30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members Present: Steve Strait, Lee Ryan, Gideon Garcia, Mike Reeve, Frank Neitz, Bob Kaufman, Dennis Parrish, Jim Dodson, Marilyn Romano

Excused Absences: Bob Hajdukovich, Mike Stedman

DOT&PF: Deputy Commissioner John Binder; Division Operations Manager Troy LaRue; Development Specialist Linda Bustamante; ANC Airport Manager Jim Szczesniak; Central Region Aviation Design Chief Luke Bowland; Statewide Aviation Transportation Planner Rebecca Douglas; Southcoast Region M&O Chief Pat Carroll; Southcoast Region Director Lance Mearig; ANC Operations Safety & Security Manager Alex Moss; Commissioner John MacKinnon

FAA: Kristi Warden, Director Alaska Region Airports

OTHERS: Tom George, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA); Adam White, Alaska Airmen's Association; Mary Bondurant, Kenai Airport Mgr.; Jim Pefanis, ANC Tenant; Zoe Sobel, KUCB; Jane Dale, Alaska Air Carriers Association.

AGENDA and MINUTES – Marilyn Romano moved to accept agenda; Steve Strait seconded. Steve moved to adopt July meeting minutes; Marilyn seconded. Motions passed unanimously. Approved July meeting minutes posted to [website](#).

ANC Airport Manager Jim Szczesniak presentation:

- Reviewed slides with board noting ANC cargo activity is up 2% in FY20; 17% in 2nd Quarter CY20 and UPS and FedEx up more than 40% in June.
- Passenger forecast for FY21 is down 22%, with no scheduled international flights. Travel mandate/COVID testing is going well. Working to restart lost service for summer 2021 and add charters for this year.
- East Airpark Master Plan – the 2014 master plan identified East Airpark as needing a master plan in the future to match lease expirations. The East Airpark master plan scope has been developed and will be reviewed by the FAA to insure grant eligibility. The draft scope includes an East Airpark Advisory Committee of stakeholders and two public open houses.
- Reviewed real estate policies:
 - ANC is developing a plan to extend the term for concessionaires with current agreements.
 - ANC unable to give a preference to Alaska based businesses. This would violate FAA grant assurances.
 - ANC unable to subordinate the airport's ability to extend/renew leases to the desires of existing lease holders. This would violate FAA grant assurances.

Questions to Airport Manager about East Airpark:

Airport tenant Jim Pefanis asked when the East Airpark master plan will be completed. Airport Manager believes sometime in 2021. Jim asked if there aren't already regulations at ANC giving preferences to existing lease holders. Airport Manager advised yes there are preferences but there is always the condition that the airport can evaluate the needs of the airport and then decide if we need to act on those needs or not. Jim asked if the airport is planning to change the existing leasing preferences. Airport Manager said no but there is a process to evaluate extending leases for long periods of time through the master plan study and future consideration of redevelopment. Jim asked if there was a request for development in the East Airpark or is the master plan looking at potential future development. Airport Manager said it's for potential future development.

Steve Strait asked if there is any development planned for the southside of the airport in the area of the FCC building? Airport Manager said yes, the airport has an application and is reviewing a project proposal on the south end of the airport that should be out for public notice within a month. There are 2 small projects, small hangar and a larger development. Lee Ryan asked what the master plan calls for in that area south of the Zulu taxiway? Airport Manager responded it is for domestic cargo/aircraft operations.

Bob Kaufman thanked the Airport Manager for being responsive to the request of concessionaires to extend their term.

DC Binder Update

UAS Update – Ryan Marlow, UAS Program Coordinator for Statewide Aviation gave the board an overview of UAS operations in Alaska. To date there have been 613 UAS operations across the state; DOT&PF has 38 operators and 34 aircraft. Some upcoming operations are planned for Atigun Pass for avalanche studies; Kotzebue for airport operations, Sterling Highway bypass project– more information will be coming out about where drones are operating and altitudes. The ability to acquire and document imagery is a big asset to the department for numerous purposes. A communications effort is underway to alert and educate general aviation pilots to the use of drones in areas they may not expect to see them.

AIAS statistics – reviewed slides showing current cargo activity increases and the slow recovery with passenger enplanements. Cargo activity is up about 20% helping to offset passenger revenue shortfalls

CARES Act Funding – ANC and FAI were allocated \$33M and used \$9M for FY20 leaving \$23M for FY21. Rural airports allocated \$49M to offset lost revenue, not much revenue generated at rural airports, so state was able to use funds for a variety of aviation related purposes. \$9M utilized for FY20 with remaining \$40M to be used in FY21/22. Currently working on budget now to determine how remaining funds will be used.

APEB (Aviation Project Evaluation Board) Process – board wanted to know how airport projects end up in the department's spending plan through the APEB process. Capital needs are always being collected that drive project developments. Needs are determined by planners and engagement with communities, air carriers and stakeholders. Projects are brought to board and then scored. An APEB score does not have any impact on emergency repairs needed at airports. Airport spending plan is a multi-year rolling plan – 3 to 5 years. Meetings are open to the public.

The board and Jim Pefanis requested a link to website to review projects on APEB evaluation list. (Rebecca has sent link)

AWOS Projects – 8 projects moving forward with good coordination with the FAA.

Sand Point Landing Fees – fees were implemented a year ago at the request of the community and PenAir to accommodate a larger airplane landing at this airport that required the airport to be certificated and provide ARFF. Department will leave fees in place until it is known if new carrier requires a certificated airport. The community wants airport status to remain.

Aniak Airport NOTAM process – good coordination and communication at the beginning of the project. There was an opportunity for better communication when a last-minute NOTAM was issued that discontinued approaches to the airport.

AASP Phase III Overview - Phase III of the Alaska Aviation System Plan kicked off in July 2020 as a five-year project filled with several current and future tasks. Current tasks are: evaluate the system plan; conduct a survey with DOT&PF staff, FAA, aviation user groups, other airport sponsors to help better understand priorities for different stakeholders across the state; public involvement update to include finalizing the Adopt-an-Airport task from Phase II. In a similar fashion to the Adopt-a-Highway program, this program is intended to help airstrips across the state; inventory planning focusing on prioritizing and planning updates to the AASP website, new data connections to provide better information, and an airport classification review.

Another task still open from Phase II relates to the DOT&PF AIP Spending Plan. By the end of 2020, we anticipate the ACIP portal to be fully functioning and available for use. It will include all capitably funded AIP projects from FFY20-24 and provide an in-depth view of project details after the APEB process. We are excited to get this tool up and running.

Future tasks anticipated to occur over the next five years include: Inventory update, CIMP process refinement and expansion, fleet analysis and a runway length standard update, and creation of new videos like Alaska Lifeline. The final task we are working on scoping now is the Coastal Airport Study – This one is a hot topic that focuses on the YK Delta area, specifically some of the airports with major coastal erosion, settlement, and other deterioration. We are coordinating internally on scope now to ensure we not only capture current issues but find the best way to evaluate and plan.

Bethel Area Runways – Luke Bowland with DOT&PF Central Region advised the status of projects (design stage followed by advertise for construction) at the following locations

Kipnuk – project in design should be ready to advertise for construction bids in FY21. Design is working with Statewide Aviation to look for opportunities to fund this project sooner and ready to bid hopefully in FY22.

Chefornak – this airport project will be packaged with Kipnuk.

Tununak – project not currently in design but is on the list to nominate in the April 2021 APEB. Provided a good score is received then this project would go into design summer of 2021.

Scammon Bay – project in design should be ready to bid in 2022 – expected to be funded FY23.

Nightmute – project in design should be ready to bid in 2022 expected to be funded in 2024.

Lee Ryan said that these 5 airports are probably in the worse condition and a need for additional maintenance has been communicated locally. There is a chance that service could be stopped to some of these airports this winter. Frank Neitz mentioned Kasigluk as needing maintenance too.

Luke advised that the Kasigluk Airport project has been advertised and should be awarded soon. Construction to begin 2021.

Commissioner Comments – noted the department has rebuilt the Tununak airport numerous times. Rather than have two insufficient airports in close proximity it might make more sense to invest in a road to connect

the communities to one good airport. The Toksook Airport is located 6 miles from Tununak. Same idea for the Takotna Airport located next to the Tatalina Airport. Maybe the department could put some investment in the Tatalina Airport and share responsibility with the air force.

It's a busy time going into the budget session. DOT&PF will be meeting with OMB – any additional cuts to the Highways & Aviation maintenance and operations component will impact the department's ability to maintain facilities to the level they need especially in the winter months. CARES Act funding has helped this year but by FY23 the department will need funds to take care of basic needs.

Steve Strait asked how do you get the department to start evaluating building roads to connect some of these airports where it makes sense. Commissioner said it makes more sense to look at all transportation modes together and integrate them where it makes sense. There are opportunities to consolidate services.

Lee Ryan remembers discussions with Commissioner von Scheben about clustering villages around one airport, but this concept wasn't accepted. The department will need to find ways to explain this concept as a benefit to rural communities.

North Slope Borough – DC Binder advised the board the NSB is pursuing the transfer of ownership and management of the Barrow and Pont Hope airports. There will be lots of opportunity for public engagement. Lee asked how lease holders would be impacted at Barrow – DC Binder said leases would be transferred to new sponsor, but the term agreements should remain intact.

Board Questions

Jim Dodson asked DC Binder about recent public notice regarding security fees at some airports. DOT&PF does have proposal out for public comment related to a .50 cent security fee for passengers at airports that require TSA screening. State is incurring costs for law enforcement required at screening. Alaska Airlines is the airline that will be impacted. Annual costs for security are approx. \$1.4 M for law enforcement with \$200,000 in projected revenue from these fees.

Lee Ryan asked for more information on Sand Point Airport fees be presented at the next board meeting to include expenses and revenue associated with this certificated airport.

FAA Alaska Region Airports update – Kristi Warden told the board there is effective coordination and collaboration between her office, Alaska DOT and non-state airport sponsors. This year (FY20) the FAA's Alaska Airports Division granted \$400M for airport improvements - the most ever in one year. That number includes \$139M in CARES Act funds with the remainder AIP funding.

Board Discussion

Chairman Lee Ryan asked the board to revisit Resolution 2020-2 (Increase Passenger Air Travel Confidence and Commerce in Rural Communities during COVID-19 Pandemic). He asked the board to add additional information based on comments he received from stakeholder groups. It was also recommended by Steve the board forward the final resolution to other state departments since this resolution impacts education, commerce, and transportation. Tom George and Adam White restated the importance of the state requiring all communities imposing travel restrictions to utilize a standard template and post them in a central repository.

Chairman Lee asked the board for a motion to adopt changes to the original resolution. Bob Kaufman made a motion to make changes. Dennis Parrish seconded. The board and commissioner discussed changes and agreed to the following language:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: the Aviation Advisory Board recommends the State of Alaska require passengers and crew on all commercial airlines in Alaska to wear a face mask during times of high infection rates.

Chairman Lee Ryan asked for a motion to amend the resolution. Steve Strait moved to accept the amendment and it was seconded by Marilyn Romano. Motion carried. Board voted on final resolution; motion carried. Final resolution posted [here](#) and sent to Commissioner's office for forwarding to the Governor's office.

Bypass Mail – Chairman Lee Ryan asked if the board still wanted to issue an opinion piece about the importance of bypass mail in Alaska now that US Postmaster General DeJoy has retracted his statements. Jim Dodson recommends the board state their position on this important program and its impact on Alaska and still issue the opinion piece. Chairman Ryan will proceed with writing the letter and forward to board for review. Mike Reeve said this an opportunity to educate the public that is often misunderstood and supports this letter.

Public Comment –

Tom George thanked the department for distributing FEMA face masks out to air workers on a statewide basis. Jim Pefanis would like to discuss with the East Airpark issue with the Commissioner. Adam White thanked all the board members for their time and issuing this important resolution.

Board Comments –

Jim Dodson restated his support of the resolution and thanked the Commissioner for advancing it.

Bob Kaufman discussed current insurance challenges with operators that cater to the tourism industry. He's been told there are only a couple of insurance underwriters in the state. Air taxi's may not survive. Chairman Ryan said the insurance market is hard right now. A lot of the insurance underwriters have pulled out of the Alaska market and there are premium increases if you can even be insured.

Steve Strait will work with the chair on distributing the resolution. There may be an opportunity to have Dr. Zink help with this effort.

Chairman Lee Ryan advised board of upcoming Alaska Aviation Safety Summit scheduled for October 8th. More information will be forwarded to board. Kristi Warden sent links to the board.

Next meeting planned for December. Board will be polled to determine best date to schedule.

Meeting adjourned 4:38 p.m.