

Responses to Community and Regional Users Questionnaire May, 2006

A total of 53 residents of Kotzebue and the surrounding villages responded to the questionnaire, which was mailed to them in April. Twenty-seven of the respondents were 8th grade students. The questionnaire was part of a week-long study of maps, the airport, and their culture by the students.

1.	What could be done to improve the Kotzebue airport? Explain what improvements are needed and why?
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The majority of responses (27) said runway improvements needed to be made, followed by accommodating bigger jets (7), which some felt would lower their freight costs and keep people from being bumped from their flights. They categorized the runway improvements to include a longer runway; a north-south runway and some mentioned a ski plane strip. Some of the reasons for lengthening the runway included safety, quality of landing and problems with the wind changing direction.

The remaining responses discussed terminal, amenities (tied with 4 responses) followed by access, growth, location, none, weather (tied with 3 responses each). Terminal improvements were described as a combined terminal for transfer from Alaska Airlines to Hageland, for example. Other ideas included more efficient luggage retrieval and cover from weather for passengers leaving the airport. Amenities include larger waiting area, food service and telephones. Weather was mentioned and all three responses mentioned “fog” as the issue with the current airport location.

2.	If we can’t accommodate improvements at the existing Kotzebue airport site, would relocation of the airport be acceptable? If yes, what factors should we consider when making a decision to relocate the airport (cost, distance, etc.)?
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Respondents indicated that the most important factors to consider when making a decision about relocating the Kotzebue airport to be location (15 responses) and cost (14 responses). Five respondents indicated “No” to relocation. Five thought growth would be an important factor. These factors were followed by “access” (4 responses); and “transportation” and “wildlife” (tied with 3 responses each).

Responses mentioning “location” as a factor cited

- “Yes, It shouldn’t be too far away from town;”
- “Yes, the relocation would be acceptable, but you should keep in mind the distance and cost (cost for gas to and from airport, cost of roads), road maintenance (plowing), and also if the distance is too long people can miss their flights.”

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- “Yes, it would be acceptable if it was relocated within a 5-mile radius. If it was 13 miles out (Cape Blossom), then it would be unnecessary because of the cost of gas and the transportation.”

When speaking of “cost” the respondents said:

- “No. I think the cost would be outrageous to relocate hangars, and maintenance buildings as well as new roads, runways, and cost of driving back and forth even a few miles more. What about water, sewer, electricity? Way too much cost.”
- “Yes, when making a decision to relocate the airport we should consider the cost most of all. In relocating the airport, we would need more gravel for roads, the airport, and buildings. Since Kotzebue doesn’t have much gravel, it would cost a lot to get gravel from somewhere else (for digging, shipping and pay the workers for doing their jobs).”

3.	Please describe the service the Kotzebue airport provides to you.
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40 respondents indicated “passengers and freight” as the service provided by Kotzebue airport. Two indicated that the airport provides business opportunity or employment. Some further clarified the freight as “mail” and “groceries.” Others mentioned daily fish shipments in July and August. Some misunderstood the question and commented on the quality of service received from the airport. One said the service was “outstanding considering the challenges of arctic living.”

4.	How would improvements to the existing Kotzebue airport affect your family and/or business?
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Respondents indicated that improvements to the existing airport would have no affect on their family and/or business (10 respondents). Some indicated that access (5 responses) and runway and safety (4 responses each) would have an affect on their family and/or business.

Of the respondents that listed access as a factor affecting their family they noted “if the airport is moved out of town, I’ll utilize services much less” or “...we would have to find a ride every time we go out of town.”

Some felt that if the airport accommodated larger aircraft, it would be cheaper to fly. One student felt that relocation of the airport would make his father consume more gas because he works for Bering Air.

Other comments:

- It would be quieter.
- A longer airport wouldn’t be as scary.
- It would be expensive to get to if moved.
- Easier and safer access means less corners to maneuver around to and from the airport—more peace of mind leaving and returning to Kotzebue.

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5.	How would relocation of the Kotzebue airport affect your family and/or business?
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Respondents indicated that relocation of the airport would impact their transportation to the airport (29 respondents). Many respondents mentioned the convenience of simply walking to the airport. While others commented that if the airport is relocated out of walking distance, then they would have to buy a vehicle and pay for gas for the vehicle or take a taxi cab to the airport. One respondent mentioned that even though the distance was a concern, "...it would be worth it because in the long run it will save us money".

The fish co-op expressed concern that the added cost of gas to drive their fish to the airport located far from town would in turn raise the cost of their fish to the markets in Anchorage. This would mean that they could not compete and would eventually shut the fish co-op down. Therefore people would lose a source of income and/or jobs.

One respondent commented that with more vehicles, parking would then be an issue.

A few respondents (3 respondents) thought that relocating the airport would help stimulate economic growth in Kotzebue, which would translate into more jobs for local residents.

6.	What, if any, problems do you have parking at the Kotzebue airport?
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Most of the respondents (37) had no problem parking at the existing airport. The next group (6) said they had no vehicle. If they had problems at the airport the respondents listed "congestion" was indicated by 5 responses that said that the parking lacked from proper planning, lack of overnight parking, and small space for parking.

One specific problem mentioned related to the fish co-op, the respondent wrote: "The co-op has had ongoing problems at the airport over parking, plane non- or late arrival and lack of a place at or near the airport to keep fish refrigerated. We have a refrigerated van."

Airport users from communities outside of Kotzebue noted that they did not have vehicles when in Kotzebue so this was not a problem.

7.	What difficulties, if any, do you have with Kotzebue airport security at the airport (getting onto the airfield property)
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35 respondents do not have any difficulties with the airport security.

Some respondents (11) commented that there is a road for vehicle traffic at the end of the runway to allow for traffic between Kotzebue and the Tent City area for subsistence activity. The vehicles traveling on this road have to wait for all air traffic to clear the runways before using the road. This can take a while. It also causes some concern for safety. However, if this road is closed, then they have to take a much longer road around the airport to get to the coast.

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One respondent would like to see more screening of luggage for alcohol being brought in to dry villages.

8. If you believe the Kotzebue airport should be relocated, please tell us why?

Many respondents (23) believe that if the airport is relocated, it will make more room for housing and business growth. This would translate into more jobs for local residents. Some of the respondents (12) mentioned that if the airport is relocated, the runway would be longer, which would mean safer, more comfortable landings.

A few respondents also mentioned that a longer runway would allow for larger jets to land, which would mean cheaper goods for the residents.

11 respondents did state that they do not believe that the airport should be relocated.

9. Please tell us about the following possible locations for the Kotzebue Airport –note their location on the map.

AREA 1

Is it a reasonable distance from Kotzebue? Why?

Respondents believe that Area 1 is still within walking distance and easier to maintain in the winter than the other suggested areas (38 respondents). A few also mentioned that it would be easier to bring sewer/water/electricity to this area.

Other respondents (14) believe that Area 1 is too close to the town's water supply; it would be too noisy; and, it is too close. Kotzebue would grow out to the airport again.

AREA 1

Will cultural, historic or subsistence resources be impacted nearby? If yes, what resources would be impacted?

14 respondents believe that there will be no or minimal impacts.

38 respondents believe there will be impacts to the following:

- Subsistent picking of wild plants/berries
- Nesting areas of migratory birds/Animal habitats
- Hunting
- Kotzebue Water Source
- Graveyard

5 did not know of any impacts in this area.

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AREA 1

Would maintenance of an access road to this facility be high, moderate or low? Why?

14 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **high** because:

- The irregularities of the land
- Winter maintenance needed to make the road safe, snow and ice free
- Kotzebue area does not have a gravel pit nearby
- Gas [to fuel vehicles] is expensive

10 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **moderate** because:

- The road will need constant maintenance in the wintertime
- The airport is not too far from town

20 respondents indicated the maintenance would be **low** because:

- The short length of road
- There is an existing road
- It could be done with proper equipment

6 respondents did not know.

AREA 2

Is it a reasonable distance from Kotzebue? Why?

Many respondents (35) indicated that this is not a reasonable distance from Kotzebue. Some stated that it is “just too far for passenger access for the elderly, children & people w/out transportation”; “too much infrastructure needed—costs would be high to prohibitive”; “...we would have to make a road and it would probably be like the new road: cracks, sides sloughing off, etc”

One respondent stated that the airport is still too close to Kotzebue. Another respondent mentioned that the wind mills [wind power generators] are in this area.

Other respondents (15) believe that it is a reasonable distance from Kotzebue. There is less fog in this area; there is better coastal access; it is still a short distance from town; and, it is far from the town’s water supply.

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AREA 2

Will cultural, historic or subsistence resources be impacted nearby? If yes, what resources would be impacted?

18 respondents believe that there will be no or minimal impacts.

31 respondents believe there will be impacts to the following:

- Subsistent picking of wild plants/berries
- Nesting areas of migratory birds/Animal habitats
- Caribou migration
- Hunting
- Increased noise may impact sea mammals and other wildlife

4 did not know of any impacts to the area.

AREA 2

Would maintenance of an access road to this facility be High, Moderate or Low. Why?

27 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **high** because:

- Cost of equipment and operators
- Winter maintenance to make the road safe, snow and ice free
- More road to maintain
- It will become a high traffic area

14 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **moderate** because:

- Coastal approach easier to maintain
- 10 miles is still not too far from town
- Cost of gravel—but cement costs more

5 respondents indicated the maintenance would be **low** because:

- With proper equipment
- Road not too long

4 respondents did not know.

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AREA 3

Is it a reasonable distance from Kotzebue? Why?

40 respondents believe that Area 3 is too far from Kotzebue. Most expressed concern about transportation to the airport—either they would have to buy a car (which most can't afford) or gas would cost too much. The other transportation option would be to take a cab to the airport. Again, they felt that this would cost money. A few respondents mentioned that winter road maintenance would be non-stop because of the distance. One respondent mentioned that the land is too marshy in this Area.

There were 10 respondents who believe that Area 3 is a reasonable distance. A few reasons mentioned by the respondents are the town would have room for further expansion; the airport would be out of the fog; "All jet noise, freight debris & trash will be isolated over the hill from Kotzebue."

AREA 3

Will cultural, historic or subsistence resources be impacted nearby? If yes, what resources would be impacted?

17 respondents believe that there will be no or minimal impacts.

29 respondents believe there will be impacts to the following:

- Subsistent picking of wild plants/berries
- Nesting areas of migratory birds/Animal habitats
- Caribou migration
- Hunting
- Old village sites in the area

2 did not know of any impacts to the area.

AREA 3

Would maintenance of an access road to this facility be High, Medium or Low. Why?

40 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **high** because:

- The irregularities of the land due to marsh and two hills
- The road would move and subside
- Winter maintenance to make the road safe, snow and ice free—there is no budget
- Long distance/tough conditions

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- Long, long winter
- Maintenance needs modern equipment
- The cost of gravel

2 respondents indicated that the maintenance would be **moderate** because:

- It would be easy to have one or two roads for access
- Not too far from town

4 respondents indicated the maintenance would be **low** because:

- Daily grading of road – nice!
- With proper equipment and good people

2 respondents did not know.

10.	Are there other locations that should be considered for the Kotzebue airport? Please circle the areas on the map (next page) and describe why they would be good location choices for the Kotzebue airport.
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14 respondents had no suggestions for a good location of the airport. A couple of respondents noted that they like the current airport location.

Some respondents suggested Lockhart Point (7) and Pike’s Spit (6). They mentioned that either of these locations are not that far away from town and there would be no important cultural, historic, or subsistence impacts at either of these locations.

One respondent would like to see the airport located near water so that a deep-water port can be developed to help the oil industry and the Kotzebue economy.

11.	Show us any areas in and around the community that are used for subsistence, that have cultural or historical significance, or that you feel should not be used for an airport? Please mark these areas on the attached map. (You can put a circle with a number in it and describe it below) Please describe the subsistence, cultural or historic significance of this area:
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12 respondents did not have any information to share with us about this question.

16 respondents did mark up the maps and submitted them with their questionnaire responses. Please refer to the marked-up maps for the areas discussed. Below is a list of the subsistence, cultural or historic significance mentioned by the respondents:

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Berry Picking	Hunting	Water Source
Fishing	Sadie Creek (fishing spot)	Wildlife
Gathering	Trails that people use	Wind Mills
Grave Sites	Caribou migrating trails	

12. Would you be concerned about the cost of building a new Kotzebue airport? Please explain why.

Respondents (33 respondents) do have a concern about the cost to build a new airport. Some respondents noted that the cost of living in Kotzebue is already high and the city is already in debt. Who will pay the building cost of a new airport? Will the city and the residents share the cost? Will it be paid for through new taxes or an increase in taxes?

The cost of material and labor will be high. However, one respondent noted that the sooner the airport can be built, the lower the cost will be.

Some residents are not concerned about the cost to build the airport (16 respondents). They believe that the economic growth generated by a new airport will offset much of the cost to build a new airport. They believe that in the long run it would pay for itself many times over and be well worth the effort.

Some respondents noted that they weren't too concerned about cost because the state and federal governments will pay for the construction costs.

13. What other issues should be considered if the Kotzebue airport is relocated? Please tell us why they should be considered.

Below is a list of other issues that should be considered, if the airport is relocated. Noted in parentheses is the number of respondents who mentioned that particular issue.

Access/Distance/Transportation (12)	Growth (1)
Wildlife (9)	Hunting (1)
Cost (7)	NANA (1)
Maintenance (6)	Need (1)
Air Quality (5)	Noise (1)
Terminal (4)	Public Outreach (1)
Environment (2)	Safety (1)
Jobs/Growth (3)	Security (1)
Amenities (1)	Utilities (1)
Change (1)	