



Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study

Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study
ADOT PROJECT NO.: 61317
GROUP: Citizens' Advisory Committee
DATE: July 31, 2006
TIME: 3:00 to 5:00 PM
LOCATION: Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers
MEETING OUTREACH: Email and telephone calls to committee members; telephone follow-up by Kim Franklin, NWAB
MEETING ATTENDANCE: See Below
MEETING MATERIALS: Land Use Map, PowerPoint presentation, Agenda
STAFF PRESENT: ADOT& PF: Donna Gardino;
PDC, Inc.: Royce Conlon;
Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks
MEETING INFORMATION:

Donna Gardino, ADOT&PF, opened the meeting. She noted that she was replacing Judy Chapman as Project Manager for ADOT. She asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Royce Conlon then provided an overview of the project scope and the steps taken by the project team thus far using a PowerPoint presentation. She mentioned the January public and advisory group meetings; the survey and questionnaire mailed to the community, airport users and aircraft operators. She talked about the wind analysis and finally, provided a brief overview of the community demographics report completed by Northern Economics.

Anne Brooks, Public Involvement Coordinator, provided a summary of the input received from questionnaires distributed to the various user groups. Ms. Brooks then went through the input sub area by sub area as they corresponded to the map attached to the survey. Details are included in the copy of the presentation on file and available on the project web site.

Ms. Conlon then discussed the work that will be taking place over the next several months – Aviation forecasting—to determine the number and type of aircraft to use Kotzebue airport in the future; the facility requirements that will be overlaid on the Baldwin Peninsula when identifying possible locations for the airport; the upcoming agency meeting and field program. She also noted the financial analysis that would take place and outlined what is included in a feasibility study.

The following are questions or comments recorded by the project team during the meeting. The committee's comments/questions are shown in *italics* and the team responses are shown in regular type. These questions were asked and answered during the presentation.

Is it possible to bring the current Kotzebue airport up to standards? It is possible, however, it could be very expensive. This will be analyzed in this project.

We are concerned about the low ground around the existing airport. Water has risen 2.5 to 3 feet in the last three years. High areas of the Baldwin Peninsula are at 24-90 feet, which would be a better place for an airport. The tides are eating at places and eroding the shoreline. There is an area where cliffs are eroding – one about a ¼ mile long. Sometimes at high tide, we barely see the airport. It might be under water within 5 years.

One member noted that in 1982 he hunted belugas at Elephant Point. Jets started service at the Kotzebue airport in 1984 and 1985. Belugas avoided Kotzebue Sound since then. He had confirmation of the belugas reacting to air traffic noise because a friend spotted them and watched them turn when a jet was approaching the airport – this was the first confirmation of a correlation between the belugas and the airport. In 1996 DNA testing found that the Belugas in the area were not from Kotzebue stock.

Have there been any coastal erosion studies that the team should be aware of? To our knowledge, none have been completed.

If everything goes well, how long would it take [to get a new airport]? The length of time to develop a new airport will depend on availability of funding to move the airport, construct the access road and relocate tenants, etc. We do not know at this time, but at best likely 10 years before first stage could be constructed. Re-location would be a long-term plan.

Ms. Conlon noted that the current airport loses about \$188,000 per year—it does not pay for itself.

Consider siting the airport close to a gravel source because it would keep the costs down.

Regarding the wind data, what you have presented is the “historic normal” weather pattern – what we’ve seen over the last 15 years. Southeast winds are more normal with variations by season – summer different than winter. Ms. Conlon noted that the data presented was from over 10 years worth of data and that based on the data, Kotzebue could get by with a single runway for jets—one without a crosswind runway. The crosswind runway, however, would be appropriate for the smaller aircraft that service the outlying villages.

Wind is from the west in the summer and east in the winter. Another commenter said it was southeast in the summer and consistent across the Baldwin Peninsula.

The wind blown drifting is huge and a real problem on Ted Steven's Way.

When the team talked about the community demographics, the committee indicated that there were about 12 homes for sale at this time. Folks are always moving in and out of Kotzebue. The committee indicated that the primary economic activities listed for Kotzebue should also include services (banking/commerce, etc).

For clarification, Ms. Conlon indicated that the Gold in the Arctic Deposit was at Ambler and also included copper, zinc and silver. The Coal at Deadfall Syncline was at Point Lay. The committee suggested we add Natural Gas to the “Other major activities considered:”

Ms. Conlon spoke about the field program scheduled for August of this year – about two (2) days of time with a biologist, archaeologist, and geologist. She asked if a helicopter flying the area would be an issue for subsistence users. *The committee indicated that it would not, they advised the team to issue public service announcements before and during the field programs to make local residents aware of the helicopter use.*

Have you ever considered small planes in town and larger planes in the new location? No. Generally, the DOT only wants to operate one airport in a community. This might be possible if the community wants to take over ownership and management of the small airport.

Does the project team need permission to access KIC and/or NANA lands for their field work? The committee suggested that Ernie Norton accompany the project team on the field reconnaissance. No other permissions were mentioned as being required.

The financial analysis would look at the cumulative effect of activities in the area – the KIC land distribution, the extension of city water/sewer, road to Cape Blossom and port in the Cape Blossom area.

Do we need to stay away from native allotments? *Generally yes, it depends on ownership. Some owners don't have a problem, others might.*

When the team spoke about the evaluation criteria to be used to determine feasibility, the committee suggested we add “compliance with FAA safety standards.”

Working with a overlay provided by the team, committee members suggested several potential airport locations to be evaluated. The committee suggested that the team avoid water or land with lots of islands in them as these provide plenty of nesting habitat for swans and other waterfowl. The committee suggested that if the airport impacted the Noorvik/Kiana trail, the trail could be re-routed around it. One area that the committee thought we should consider is located near the 5 mile radius (as shown on the map) south of Kotzebue in T17N, R18W sections 25, 26, 35 and 36. Flat spots on either side of Sadie Creek Camp areas near Cape Blossom - were also identified.

In closing, the team talked about next steps and discussed the next meeting date. Most committee members felt that August was too soon for a public meeting and suggested that November would be a better month for a public meeting. The team passed on a request from Kotzebue middle school teacher, Walt Maslen, that we add a student member to our committee.

The committee endorsed this suggestion fully. They suggested that we consider connecting with students at their spring job fair and in the classroom, if possible.

Attendance:

Committee Members Present:

Sandy Schroyer-Beaver, KIC; Ross Schaeffer, Sr, NWAB Mayor; Kim Franklin, NWAB Planning; Linda Joule, Kotzebue IRA Council; Herman Reich, City of Kotzebue; Ernest Norton, KIC.

Committee Members Unable to attend:

Walter Sampson, NANA Corporation; Paulette Schuerch, Maniilaq Association

Committee Membership Changes:

Jackie Hill will replace Paulette Schuerch to represent Maniilaq Association

Related documents on file:

Sign in Sheets
Handouts (Comment Sheet)
Meeting graphics
PowerPoint Presentation
Contact List