



Kotzebue Airport Relocation *Feasibility Study*

Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study
ADOT PROJECT NO.: 61317
GROUP: Citizens' Advisory Committee
DATE: January 9, 2007
TIME: 2:00 to 4:00 PM
LOCATION: Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers
MEETING OUTREACH: Email and telephone calls to committee members
MEETING ATTENDANCE: See below
MEETING MATERIALS: *Handouts:* Agenda; PowerPoint Presentation slides; Evaluation Criteria Worksheet; Comment Sheet
Graphics: Land Use Map, PowerPoint Presentation
STAFF PRESENT: *ADOT& PF:* Donna Gardino;
PDC, Inc.: Royce Conlon;
Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks

MEETING INFORMATION:

Donna provided introductory remarks. Royce Conlon thanked the group for their assistance and then started a round of self-introductions. Committee members received a copy of the *Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study Interim Report*. Royce noted that since there are new members, she would be presenting some refresher information in her PowerPoint presentation.

Royce went through the PowerPoint presentation and noted that comments on the Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study Interim Report are needed by February 1, 2007.

The following is a summary of the comments, statements, questions and answers made by committee members, community members or project team members at the meeting. The comments are alphabetical by topic. Where appropriate, quotes from the committee members are presented in *italics*.

Aircraft and Airport Requirements

- It was noted that Alaska Airlines is phasing out the 737-200 series jets. They will be replaced with 737-400 in a passenger/cargo configuration, which will impact the runway requirements.
- The current airport runway is 5900-foot in length. We could use 6500-feet but have to add another 15% [in length] for safety according to proposed FAA requirements, which leads to a 7500-foot long airport. The team is working with FAA and DOT to evaluate different ways of providing a safer airport. Without improvement to the runway, air carriers might be required to come in to Kotzebue with lighter loads. Our options are to

plan and build for it or invest more in maintenance to make sure that in bad weather conditions the runway is in good operating condition.

- The FAA is concerned about the safety of both large and small aircraft.
- Kotzebue airport needs to meet the requirements for the most demanding aircraft. While Alaska Airlines is phasing out the 737-200 aircraft and planning to use the 737-400 or 737-700, the 737-200 requires the larger facility and is considered the design aircraft. Northern Air Cargo plans to continue using 737-200s.
- The safety area length requirement is 1000 feet.
- Engineering Materials Arresting System (EMAS) will be considered in Kotzebue at the end of the runway. It has been determined practical to use and raises the level of safety of passengers when the aircraft goes off the end of the runway.
- The project team commented that width is desired, and FAA is slowly requiring the RSA width on the airports. We have been fortunate that we haven't had any dangerous crashes. A couple of times aircraft ran off the end of the runway.
- If the length were increased, would it decrease the cost of goods and services? The team responded that maybe. A longer airport may be able to accommodate different types of aircraft, which may cause a decrease in the cost of goods and services. However, access during the poor weather months of the year would still be a factor in the cost of goods and services.

Airport Safety

- Committee members expressed concerns about safety. Specifically regarding the hill at the end of the airport; the times when the aircraft can't land because of snow on the runway; and when they have experienced landing at Kotzebue with one engine.
- They are concerned about the proximity of the road to the airport.
- They are concerned about the hunters who traverse the airport to get to small planes taking them on hunting trips—especially when they are carrying firearms.

Airport Layout

- A drawing of an idealized airport layout was shared with the committee members. The idealized layout had not been applied to the Kotzebue Airport yet. Committee members asked how far is the runway in Bethel from the community? It is quite a ways, maybe 3 miles.
- Committee members understand that the runway is constrained. They are very concerned about jets crashing and hope it doesn't take too long to come up with a solution.
- Lots of people travel in small planes – not just jets.
- We want to look at some options for constructing a new airport.
- Determining flight minimums will be part of either a new relocated airport or improved airport in the existing location.

Airport Location

- Locate the airport along the road to the deep-water port. Material for the airport might be available from dredging the deep-water port.
- Add criteria for combined facilities making it more attractive if facilities are combined.
- Currently the state is getting federal funds for the road to Cape Blossom--\$3.5 million.

- Regarding Area 3: If eventually there will be a road to Cape Blossom, what does the city have planned for long-term relocation and housing relocation? Does Kotzebue want the airport relocated? Has the City had any discussion about developing any housing relocations?
- The community is planning to expand up on the hill where costs are greater for folks. If we move the airport, we could fill the lagoon to provide more space for growth and then the services are closer.
- Committee members noted that the entire beach area might be eroding away because of global warming. We have to look at a certain elevation for future. Two years ago in the fall, the water rose high enough that there was about two inches of water over the end of the runway.
- Committee members discussed the airport location. Were they really serious about moving the airport? Should they move ahead with a desire to move the runway? It isn't black and white that the community wants to move the runway. The project team confirmed that the community has said that they want the airport to remain where it is.
- Committee members wanted to know if the analysis will consider an airport further out, one close to the community and changing the existing airport? All three ideas will be considered.

Cost /Funding

- A new runway will be costly and will depend on where the gravel comes from.
- Costs for an extra 1000 feet of runway are expected to be significant.
- Future phases of the project will fund additional geotechnical explorations in this area.
- Committee members wanted to know who would end up paying for the cost of the airport. How will DOT look at structure of financing and whether the City of Kotzebue is willing to contribute to the airport relocation? The project team responded that the community could put some money into the airport project. If the community puts money into the project then it increases the score of the APEP. It can be in-kind donations, such as gravel.
- Is Kotzebue in competition with other communities? Yes, Kotzebue will be competing with other facilities throughout the state for funds with each airport competing within a common class of facilities. For example, regional transportation hubs like Kotzebue compete against other regional transportation hubs like Nome, Barrow, Prudhoe, etc. The funding follows the high scoring projects. The group scoring the projects is comprised of individuals from the ADOT regions, i.e., Southeast, Central and Northern.
- About \$70-90 million goes to airport projects in Alaska annually. This airport relocation cost could be two to three times the annual amount budgeted for all of Alaska. Deficiencies of the airport would cause the airport to be scored high. In addition, a cost benefit analysis would be completed, which is a ratio of the number of folks in the community relative to the cost of the project
- Concern was expressed that this project is low on the list of community priorities. The community needs to let the DOT planners know how important their project is by writing letters of support. In addition, if the cost of relocation and improvement is the same, then it might be ranked high.
- A committee member stated, “\$79 million dollars has been invested in the Kotzebue Airport to date. It is a huge investment to walk away from. Does it make sense to move

away from this investment? It is time to be part of the planning process; we are as concerned as the FAA and the State about the airport. The fact is that if we are going to do planning, we, as a community, want to participate in the planning process. In the end, we want to have ownership in the product. Every day, we have to live with the road, airport, fence, etc. We are tired of reacting to the plans. We want to move forward with getting a new runway. We have to go through the process.”

Economic Development

- There might be economic development potential for KIC or NANA or others.
- Committee members noted that they should be looking at economic development – KIC or NANA or others wanted to know who gets the revenues from the airport? The team responded that a portion of the revenues stays with the landowners. The State will acquire the land for the airport through a right of way acquisition process. The leasehold revenues at the airport pay for some of the airport maintenance. DOT would need to retain these revenues.
- The City could look at options for KIC to own the runway. However, it would mean that in addition to the community receiving airport revenues, they would incur the operating costs too and share in the liability. If some catastrophe happens, the landowner becomes liable for the costs.
- A committee member asked if the state could consider building the runway and KIC could lease property to the facility owner.
- It was noted that there are some villages that maintain their own airports. Venetie and Arctic Village – they do the projects for FAA. The villages are responsible for maintaining their airport and they get their revenues. However, they are finding it more difficult to continue operations. Juneau and Kenai are airports that take care of their own costs.
- Committee members asked about the ownership of the airports in Fairbanks and Anchorage. The DOT generally doesn't like to operate more than one airport in a community. Generally, the city operates the General Aviation (GA) airport and the DOT operates the air carrier airport.

Evaluation Criteria

- Add floodplain or watershed impacts to the evaluation criteria.
- Consider global warming and its implications on the feasibility of moving the airport.
- Add utilities (water and sewer extension) to evaluation criteria.

Firearms/Hunters

- Concern was expressed about firearms, especially a way to control the small air taxi operations whose passengers are carrying munitions and firearms. Especially during the hunting season, hunters are on the ramp and there is no way to secure the airport.
- NANA offices are too close to the airport and safety is a concern.
- Separating the hunters from the rest of the passenger operations is important.
- Our challenge is to determine how you separate the cultural aspects of the concerns—airport requirements versus cultural needs.

Future Growth

- The project team shared information about future growth of the community and needs of the airport. The aviation forecast, or the number of trips projected in the future, is accomplished by looking at historic operations and passenger enplanements (people getting on and off of the airplanes), cargo and Kotzebue-based aircraft.
- Enplanements have only grown 0.1%, the population has grown at 1%. The project team used a growth projection rate of 1.4% growth per year, which shows that we do not anticipate huge growth at the airport.
- Students who participated in the survey will be young adults when the results of this study are implemented.

General Aviation Airport Road Access

- Committee members brought up for discussion the road at the end of the runway.
- A committee member commented that people who don't have transportation would have to walk a longer distance, if they could not use the beach access near the airport.
- Attempts have been made to block beach access before and people would run into the barriers with their trucks.
- Concern was expressed about what the community would do if the state [DOT] or FAA said that they wouldn't pay unless the road is closed. The FAA would have to find an alternative for the beach access. The alternative the project team is currently pursuing is to shift the runway towards the hillside to reduce the conflict between the runway and the road.
- The DOT would maintain the access road to the relocated airport. However, in the future, as the community grows along the road to the airport, the responsibility for the maintenance might change.

Security

- A committee member asked about security at the existing airport. The project team responded that it is an issue and needs to be improved. We will be considering it in the study.

Utilities

- Sewer and water are needed at the airport and will be considered as part of the evaluation.
- Power requirements will be considered, for example, the smaller airports use 1.5kVA. Terminal buildings, leaseholder improvements, etc., have electrical needs.

Coordination

- One committee member suggested that Kotzebue governing organizations meet quarterly to discuss common issues.

Attendance:

Committee Members Present:

Brianna Triplett, Student; Herman Reich, City of Kotzebue; Kim Franklin, NWAB Planning; Martha Whiting, NWAB Mayor; Sandy Shroyer-Beaver, KIC; Walter Sampson, NANA Corporation

Committee Members Unable to attend:

Jackie Hill, Maniilaq Association; Linda Joule, Kotzebue IRA Council; Richard Atoruk, Student

Committee Membership Changes:

Brianna Triplett, Student and Richard Atoruk, Student were added as new members to the committee.

Related documents on file:

Sign in Sheets

Agenda

Handouts

Meeting Graphics

Contact List