



Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study

Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study ADOT&PF Project No. 61317

Public and Citizen's Advisory Group Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study
GROUP: Public
DATE: January 18th, 2006
TIME: 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
LOCATION: Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers

MEETING OUTREACH:

Two notices in the *Arctic Sounder* newspaper announced the meeting in the January 5 and January 12, 2006 weekly editions; display advertising in the *Anchorage Daily News* on January 10, 2006; public service announcements on KOTZ radio; postcard mailer to all Kotzebue box holders mailed on December 26, 2006; and posters were also displayed at local businesses. The meeting itself was broadcast live on KOTZ radio to the community and surrounding villages within the KOTZ listening area.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 24 (total for both meetings)

MEETING MATERIALS: 1) Handouts: comment sheet; 2) meeting graphics consisting of aerial photos of the study area from Kotzebue south to Cape Blossom and land use in the study area. The project's web address was provided to the attendees: www.kotzebueairport.info

STAFF PRESENT:

ADOT&PF: Judy Chapman, ADOT&PF Project Manager; Donna Gardino, ADOT&PF Northern Region Planner, Ryan Anderson, ADOT&PF Northern Region Designer; PDC Engineering: Royce Conlon, Consultant Project Manager, Heather Estabrook, Consultant Project Engineer; Brooks & Associates: Anne Brooks, Public Involvement Coordinator

MEETING INFORMATION

Attendees were greeted at the door and asked to sign the sign-in sheets. The meetings consisted of a presentation followed by a question and answer session. The evening meeting was broadcast by KOTZ radio to the community and villages within the KOTZ listening area. Meeting graphics were available for review prior to the team's presentation. Judy Chapman welcomed everyone at the beginning of the presentation and explained how the project had originated in the City of Kotzebue's Comprehensive Plan. Project Manager, Royce Conlon describing the project in general terms and then ask if there were any comments from the group on existing airport issues and potential locations for a new airport. Participants also commented on planning methods.



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COMMENTS

Existing Airport Issues

- There is no way to make the airport longer to accommodate larger planes.
- Airport security is difficult to enforce (visiting hunters, traffic across the west end, etc).
- There are problems with safety because of obstructions on the east end.
- There are many safety issues at the old airport. A new site would provide better safety all around.
- Fog problems exist because of the airport's proximity to the water. There is much less fog on the hill.
- (Instrument Landing System) ILS precision approaches required: planes cannot get in when there are strong west and north winds.
- The ILS approach is offset: planes head towards buildings and then veer off before landing.
- The landfill and lagoons are too close to the airport.
- Some floatplane operations take place at the existing airport. A new airport should have these as well.
- At the current airport, there are no good ski-landing sites. Pilots set down on lagoon sea ice (Kotzebue Lagoon). A new airport should have a new ski strip.
- The buildings are located far enough on the North/South runway, but small aircraft park close to the runway. Aircraft parked on runway 17-35 are obstructions.
- Birds around the airport area are hazardous. They flew into engines of an Alaska Airlines jet.
- The location of the VOR inhibits or prohibits community development.
- Community development and growth needs to stay nearby utilities and infrastructure.
- Roads and power lines are nearby the VOR.
- Kotzebue is growing, but only about a half-dozen lots in Kotzebue are truly developable, with sewer and water services available.
- Housing is a big factor. There is no place to expand the housing. Three to four families are sharing homes, piling on top of each other.
- Housing is terrible and many homes have been abandoned (130). Former Kotzebue residents own many of these lots.
- There is no space for the town to expand.
- The airport's land could be useful for expansion.
- During fall, high water affects homes near lakes on the east side of the community.
- The community is being forced to consider creating a 2nd community nearby.
- Kotzebue fuel is expensive, with the hub fuel price at \$3.50 per gallon and the pump fuel price at \$4.60 or \$4.70, so creating a distant community will be expensive for residents moving homes far from Kotzebue's center.
- Hillside road is a location at the end of the airport with water and power.



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- Moving the airport opens greater opportunities and development potential for Kotzebue.
- The runway is not level because it was built on a marsh and thawing has created uneven settling. An insulated pad over permafrost might have a better chance of survival than a runway built over a lagoon.
- The airport's gravel was dredged from the lagoon.
- Between the mid 80s and 2005, 38 million dollars were invested in the airport.
- Kotzebue will require more goods [and thus more cargo plane space/traffic] in the future. Larger aircraft will be needed to fly into Kotzebue.
- During summer each year, cracks appear in the runway.
- The asphalt runway is a heat sink and thus unstable. A dryer site would be more stable.
- The airport's location near town restricts private property owners' uses for their property because of navigation safety.

Potential locations and their issues:

- A new airport should be built in the East/West direction and should use the old airport's material for construction.
- The estimated costs of a new airport must include both development and long-term maintenance.
- Residents may protest angrily if gravesite moving becomes part of a potential plan.
- Removal of the hill (at the east end) will expose permafrost, increasing the potential for erosion problems.
- A location at the east end of the airport restricts private property.
- Look further north and at the entire peninsula.
- Cape Blossom is a potential site 13 miles away.
- Distance of the airport from the community is relative.
- Critical issues:
 - Road/maintenance
 - Utilities
 - Proximity to town – to reduce distance needed to transport cargo and passengers to and from the community
- The airport is used frequently/daily.
- People do not need vehicles to get around the Kotzebue community, so the airport should remain close to town. Quality of life is better with airport nearby.
- Maintenance of access roads to airport is a long-term cost and concern.
- Another goal is to keep local residents' lives simple.
- Sometimes weather prohibits driving to the existing airport.
- Get feedback from villagers about
 - Walking and the cost consideration of an airport beyond walking distance
 - The airports' influence and importance to the community
- Look to Ambler, Manokotak and North Pole for other examples of hub airports.



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- Problems are associated with jet services, not the smaller regional commuter operations. How do you get them to move? What about moving jet traffic and not commuter traffic?
- The airport move has been discussed for years. There was a comprehensive plan to move the airport to Cape Blossom and build the deepwater port there as well.
- After 9/11, there was talk about closing off Second Avenue at the west end of the runway, but that thoroughway and the beach front have been used for thousands of years. It is a historic indigenous trail.
- Look at other possibilities in conjunction with this project: a road to Cape Blossom would cut some expense of road to a new airport or deep-water port.
- These projects have the same goal: to help Kotzebue's future development.

Study methodology

- Why are we all here? The 1998 Master Plan looked at relocation. We are undertaking a separate study. The borough and city have an interest in getting this study underway.
- Those planning need to talk to many community members, not just a few.
- Have Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) redraft the questionnaire and hire local folks to do the survey.
- This survey can be used to validate what was said in previous studies.
- Thanks for involving community
 - Public involvement is important in planning because it fosters community ownership.
 - If outsiders do all the planning, community members end up having to live with the problems.
- A questionnaire created by the community and state, distributed door to door, would be a good way to compile the knowledge of Kotzebue residents.
- The next step is to ask residents what they think about new potential areas and the issues, distances, and impacts surrounding them.
- There will be confusion if potential sites are identified without local input.
- Use CAC to identify locations and survey the community.
- Study should be a partnership with community. Citizens and experts should be working together and combining ideas to find a true solution.
- A solution needs to satisfy everyone: the public, environmental concerns, technical feasibility.
- Outside villages should have a chance to comment on this project because they fly into Kotzebue and do not have ground transportation.