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PROJECT UPDATE!

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Kotzebue Airport Relocation
Feasibility Study

Newsletter 1

Volume 1

April 2006



Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study

ADOT&PF Project No. 61317



introduction

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is examining the feasibility of relocating the Kotzebue Airport--a regional hub that serves 11 area communities and a growing need for air transportation of supplies, fuel, and passengers.

The objective of this study is to examine potential relocation sites to determine the costs, benefits and potential impacts of the relocation. Relocating this airport is a serious consideration because transition to a new site will be costly.

We want your input for the study. We have included a community survey in this newsletter and ask that you fill it out and return it to the project team. To encourage you to return the surveys, the design team is sponsoring a drawing for \$100 in groceries at a local store. Each household returning the survey will get one drawing ticket. Look inside for the survey.



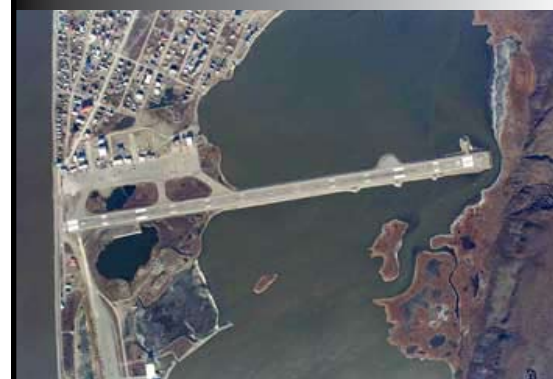
citizen's advisory committee established!

A Citizen's Advisory Committee established to assist the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) and their consultants, PDC Engineers, to develop the Kotzebue Airport Relocation Feasibility Study met on January 18, 2006 to begin their work. The committee consisting of the following Kotzebue residents will meet with the project team while the feasibility study is completed. We thank them all for a willingness to work with us to develop the study.

Frank "Obbie" Greene, NANA Corporation
Sandy Schroyer-Beaver, Kikiktagruk
Inupiat Corporation
Roswell "Ross" Schaeffer, Sr., Northwest
Arctic Borough
Walter Porter, Northwest Arctic Borough
Linda Joule, Kotzebue IRA Council
Paulette Schuerch, Maniilaq Corporation
Herman Reich, City of Kotzebue



what we heard at our January 18, 2006 public meeting



The project team came to Kotzebue in January to meet with the Citizen's Advisory Committee and Kotzebue residents to get early input on the airport relocation feasibility study. The team had questions about how the current airport was working for the community and how the airport was working for air carriers and businesses. They asked about problems with the existing airport. They asked about possible relocation sites such as Cape Blossom. They asked about other potential relocation sites. They asked whether sites or areas should be avoided because of cultural resources or subsistence activities.

see inside for details



What we heard (cont'd from front page)

Here is some of what we learned (full meeting summaries are available on the project web site at www.kotzebueairport.info).

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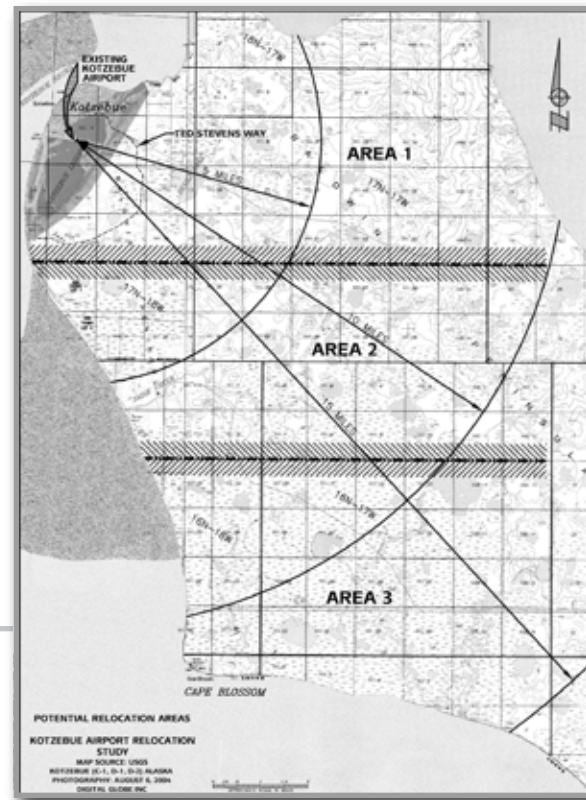
about the existing airport...

- Airport security is difficult to enforce with visiting hunters, traffic across the west end, etc.
- There are obstructions on the east end.
- The airport's proximity to the water makes it susceptible to fog.
- 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.
- Planes cannot land when there are strong west and north winds.
- Planes approach Kotzebue by heading towards community buildings and then they veer off before landing.
- Kotzebue will require more goods [and thus more cargo plane space/traffic] in the future. Larger aircraft will be needed to fly into 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 is used frequently/daily.
- Sometimes weather prohibits driving to the existing airport. For an airport out of the community, the road probably couldn't be kept open.
- 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.

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about long-term community growth and development...

- The airport's location near town restricts private property owners' uses for their property because of navigation safety.
- The location of the VOR inhibits or prohibits community development. Community development and growth needs to stay nearby utilities and infrastructure. Moving the airport opens greater opportunities and development potential for Kotzebue.
- A second community is starting to develop on the other side of the lagoon because the airport limits community expansion.
- 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 or moving the airport will be expensive residents.
- The sea level is rising with global warming.
- The community is not growing
- Future growth is possible due to Ambler Mining District



While meeting attendance was light, we received great input. We learned a lot about the area and the concerns of the community. However, we believe that there is a lot more to learn.

for more information, log on ► www.kotzebueairport.info

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about upgrading the existing airport and potential new 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.
- If the airport remains at the existing location, residents may protest angrily if gravesite moving becomes part of a potential plan
- If the airport remains at the existing location, removal of the hill (at the east end) will expose permafrost, increasing the potential for erosion problems.
- Look further north and at the entire peninsula.
- Cape Blossom is a potential site 13 miles away.

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about airport relocation issues

- Critical issues to consider when determining relocation feasibility include:
 - ✓ Cost of an access road and its maintenance
 - ✓ Availability of utilities for the airport
 - ✓ Proximity to town – to reduce distance needed to transport cargo and passengers to and from the community
- Another goal is to keep local residents' lives simple.
- Get feedback from villagers (outside of Kotzebue) about walking to the airport, costs if the airport beyond walking distance and the airports' influence and importance to the community
- 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.
- 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.

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study methods...

- 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) review 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.
- 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.

We still need your input – please complete the Community Questionnaire enclosed in this newsletter.

By completing and returning your comments, you will be entered in our drawing!

What is a "feasibility" study?

A feasibility study is an investigation that tries to clearly establish whether a project (like relocation of the Kotzebue airport) will work and achieve its expected results. Such a study usually evaluates in detail a project's technical design, its costs and benefits, social and environmental aspects, institutional issues, financial aspects, etc. Feasibility studies are usually carried-out in the very early stages of project development.

Next Steps in Study Development

The project team will summarize information from the enclosed questionnaires returned by community members. Plan a field trip for Summer 2006 to look at the area to determine environmental concerns. Complete a financial analysis including development and operational costs of a relocated airport.

Next Steps in Public Involvement

We are planning another meeting in Kotzebue in June/ July timeframe to share the results of the survey (enclosed for you to fill out). A similar survey is being sent to pilots and air carriers that use the Kotzebue airport and Kotzebue airport leaseholders. We'll share what we are hearing from these folks too. We'll also let you know what environmental and scientific studies will begin this summer.