



PUBLIC MEETING NOTES
Willow Airport Master Plan
February 18, 2010

MEETING LOCATION

Willow Elementary School

MEETING AGENDA

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. – Open House
7:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. – Presentation
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. – Questions and Comments

PROJECT TEAM IN ATTENDANCE

DOWL HKM – Tom Middendorf, Brian Hanson, Nan Llewellyn, Jessica Semmler, and Steve Pavish
DOT&PF – Allen Kemplen, Jenni Kuentzel, and Dave Post

ATTENDANCE

Approximately 40 people, including project staff, signed in.

I. OPEN HOUSE

Attendees were able to visit stations with display boards on the topics of airport issues, the Parks Highway, and the Iditarod Restart Siting Study. Project staff at each station answered questions. At a fourth station, attendees wrote down the top three issues they would like to see addressed in the Master Plan and posted the notes on an aerial photo of the airport and lake. A summary of these comments was presented to the audience after the presentation.

II. PRESENTATION

Tom Middendorf, DOWL HKM, described the purpose of the meeting and also the project purpose, goals, and the tentative schedule for the Phase I Study of the Willow Airport Master Plan. Tom also discussed the existing Parks Highway right-of-way (ROW) and potential future ROW needed, initial socioeconomic/aviation forecast findings, and public involvement opportunities.

Nan Llewellyn, DOWL HKM, described the proposed 20-year improvements listed described in the 2003 Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and existing issues identified by the project team to-date.

Brian Hanson, DOWL HKM, discussed the purpose of the Iditarod Restart Siting Study.

III. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

C = Comment Q = Question R = *Response*

Questions and comments received during the Open House and after the presentation and project staff's responses are summarized by topic.

Compatible Land Use

Q: Is the airport currently in compliance with FAA grant assurances?

R: *No. The FAA has identified incompatible land uses on airport property including Willow Elementary School, a church, and the Iditarod Race restart. Because of incompatible land uses, DOT&PF has not received Federal funds improvement projects at Willow Airport for several years.*

Q: The M&O Maintenance Building, located on Airport property, houses equipment used to maintain both the airport and the highway. Isn't this considered an incompatible land use?

R: *The Department owns and operates 270 airports across the state, many in rural communities. It is a routine practice to have road maintenance equipment stored jointly with airport maintenance equipment in a common Snow Removal Equipment Building (SREB). The cost savings from dual use are substantial and recognized as such by the FAA. The lack of citations for non-compliance on the functional utility of this approach is evidence that the practice is acceptable.*

Q: The Willow Winter Carnival, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, has been held on Willow Lake almost every year. Is the carnival considered an incompatible land use?

R: *Last year DOT&PF Leasing issued a Day Permit to hold the carnival on the lake. They will look at a Day Permit again when they receive the application.*

Q: How do you plan to resolve the incompatible land use issues on the Willow Airport?

R: *We have just started the project so we don't have answers yet. A goal of the study is to recommend how to resolve non-aviation land uses on airport property.*

Q: Why doesn't DOT&PF simply transfer the school and church land to those organizations?

R: *When an airport owner accepts FAA grant funds for the construction of airport capital improvements, the owner must agree to Airport Assurances, which among other things, require the owner to retain ownership control over all real estate within the airport boundary for at least 20 years, as shown on the FAA-approved Airport Layout Plan for the airport.*

Before the airport owner can convey away the owner's title to any part of that real estate or to commit any part of it to a non-aeronautical use, the owner must obtain a Release from the FAA. The rules relating to a release are found in 49 USC 47152 & 47153(Appendix B). A release request must be in writing and incorporate a long list of required information, including:

- a) A metes and bounds description of the property for which the release is being requested;*
- b) The purpose of the requested release (non-aeronautical lease, sale of land, etc);*
- c) The facts and circumstances that justify the release;*
- d) The fair market value of the property (supported by a current appraisal);*
- e) The anticipated net proceeds from the lease or sale of the property and the sponsor's proposed use of the proceeds; and*
- f) A comparison of the relative advantage or benefit to the airport from the lease or sale of the property, as opposed to retention of the property for direct aeronautical use;*

If the FAA does not reject the release request, a notice of the proposed release must be published in the Federal Register for 30 days. All public comments received in response to the notice must be considered before a release can be executed. The entire process can take upward to 6 months.

Any sale or lease of release airport land must be for fair market value and the proceeds must be used for airport purposes.

Willow Airport and Seaplane Base (also referred to as lake and Willow SPB)

Q: Aren't people who own lake-front property and keep a floatplane on the beach "going through the fence" when they walk across the property line to access their plane?

R: *FAA considers a "through the fence" (TTF) situation to be one where aircraft are moved across an airport boundary to or from off-airport property. The "new rules" are essentially a revision of Chapter 12.7 of the FAA's Airport Compliance Manual (Order 5190(6B)). Before the revision, the FAA Order merely "discouraged" airports from entering into TTF agreements with property owners adjacent to the airport. Now the Order says that the FAA will not support a TTF agreement related to the use of residential property (i.e. – a hangar / home, etc.). Nothing in the Order has changed regarding the FAA's position to just discourage TTF's related to commercial or private aviation that isn't connected with an off-airport residential use.*

C: More tie downs are needed at the south end of the airport.

C: Several attendees said a taxiway connecting the north edge of the apron to Runway 13 is needed.

C: Several attendees said that the frontage road needs to be extended north along the lease lots west of the runway.

C: Several attendees disagreed with the comment that more tree clearing is needed between the runway and the apron. They like that the trees keep the dust down.

C: Some attendees disagreed with the comments that Willow Lake is shallow/takeoff area is too short.

C: Several attendees like the current airport just how it is and do not want anything to change.

C: Some attendees voiced concern that DOT&PF continues to allow aircraft to cross highway.

C: Need to separate airplanes and vehicle access to Senior Center. Problem was created by DOT&PF.

Q: Are there plans to build a public-use terminal at Willow Airport?

R: *If the aviation forecast indicates that a terminal is needed during the planning period, this project will recommend a space on the airport be reserved for construction of a terminal.*

C: The owner of a local lodge said that his clients tell him every year that they would fly their jets up from the Lower 48 and land at the Willow Airport if the runway were paved.

C: Rather than shorten the runway from 4,400 ft. to 4,000 ft. to eliminate the displaced threshold (a proposed improvement listed in the 2003 ALP), DOT&PF should get eliminate railroad spur near the Runway 31 threshold and keep the runway 4,400 ft.

C: DOT&PF gravel extraction is eating into the end of the runway.

- C: If the DOT&PF Maintenance Building needs to be expanded, consider relocating it.
- C: The Alaska Railroad keeps train cars in runway approach for extended periods of time.
- C: Keep in mind that airports are more than just runways, taxiways, and aprons. Land is needed for the safety areas around the runway. The project team should determine how much land is needed to support the airport before any decisions are made about divesting airport property.
- C: More education is needed on airport safety zones (including drawings that depict these zones).
- Q: Who is the Airport Manager?
- R: *All airport-related questions (other than leasing) should be directed to the DOT&PF Airport Manager based at the airport. If the Airport Manager is unable to address the question, he will let people know who they should contact instead. People should contact the DOT&PF Leasing Department for matters related to lease lots and tie downs, and Allen Kemplen with DOT&PF Planning for planning questions.*

Willow Airport Master Plan Project

- C: Several people stated the importance of forming a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to assist in the development of the Willow Airport Master Plan.
- R: *A TAG will likely be formed, but probably after the lawsuit related to the Lake is settled to avoid conflicts between the TAG discussions and the lawsuit.*
- C: The lawsuit seems to be holding up a number of issues to be addressed in this study. Please resolve it as soon as possible, and keep the community updated on the lawsuit progress.
- Q: If Part 77 surfaces are looked at for the lake, would the recommended flight directions in the Noise Study be an option to work from?
- R: *The project team would review that study in their analysis.*
- Q: The proposed schedule shows that the Draft Phase I Study Report will be available in November 2010 and the Final Report will be published in January 2011. Would it be possible to hold a public meeting between the release of the Draft and Final Phase I Study Reports?
- R: *Yes. The project team will keep this request in mind when scheduling public meetings.*
- Q: When is the Master Plan supposed to be done?
- R: *Phase I (currently underway) is will likely be completed in early 2011. If it is determined that Phase II (not currently funded) is needed, DOT&PF will initiate Phase II soon after the completion of Phase I.*
- Q: Is an Airport Master Plan required to receive Federal funding for airport improvements?
- R: *No, but an Airport Layout Plan is required. Master Plans provide background information to support ALP's and are often developed when there is an identified need for a planning effort to solve significant airport issues.*

Other

Q: Does the FAA give a lump sum of Federal funds to DOT&PF for airport improvement projects, and DOT&PF then decides how to allocate the funds?

R: *No; the FAA funds each approved project separately. Both the FAA and DOT&PF have criteria to determine which projects receive funding. DOT&PF prioritizes projects for federal funding according to a scoring process that gives highest priority to airports that are off the highway system. This scoring process is currently being re-evaluated as part of the Alaska Aviation System Plan project and will likely be adjusted to provide some funding to airports located on the highway system.*

C: Please post a link to the FAA’s grant assurances on the project website.

C: If the Parks Highway is expanded in the future, this could prevent the fire facility from expanding.

Comments and Questions Posted on the Airport Image

Questions and comments that attendees posted on the aerial image of the Willow Airport during the Open House portion of the meeting are listed in the following table. The number of times each comment (or a similar comment) was submitted is included in the table. Several questions were answered during the “question and comment” period following the Presentation.

Comments and Questions Posted on Willow Airport Poster (Organized by Topic)	Number*
Airport	
Do not move/impact airport	3
Move airport north to a more suitable location	4
Who is the Airport Manager?	3
Is the airport in compliance with FAA grant assurances?	2
Does the airport financially support itself?	2
Is the airport eligible for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) money?	1
Airport - Land	
Does the airport have enough land to support itself?	1
Save the triangle of DOT&PF-owned land north of the lake for approaches.	1
Give the triangle of DOT&PF-owned land adjacent to 1 st Avenue to the Community Center.	1
Dispose of airport land located outside of paved perimeter (paved roads on all sides of runway)	2
DOT&PF should own or have land use regulations for land up to the BRL.	1
Offer land being used for non-airport uses to current tenants at fair market value.	
Give land being used for incompatible uses back to the Borough.	
Willow Seaplane Base	
Island in middle of lake is an obstacle	1
Are there Part 77 surfaces for the lake?	1
Lake has enough room for safe aircraft ops	2
Seaplane incursions are an issue like runway incursions	1
Jet skis make more noise than aircraft	1
Keep public recreational use of the lake	1
Make the north end of the lake a recreation area	1
Consider what the lake was used for prior to floatplane use	1
Move Seaplane Base to Kashwitna Lake or another lake	1

Airport – Facilities	
Multiple user conflicts on access road connecting lake and airport (senior housing vehicle traffic and floatplanes taxiing between the lake and airport use the same road)	1
Build overpass for aircraft and rec users off north end of lake	1
Keep road access between lake and airport open for aircraft crossing between the two facilities	2
Airport – Facilities	
Fencing needed	1
Transient aircraft parking needed	1
Seaplane fuel facilities needed	1
More seaplane tie downs needed	1
More long-term vehicle parking needed	1
Commuter terminal needed	1
Do NOT do fencing, tree removal, or shorten runway	1
Ability to lengthen runway is impacted by the Alaska Railroad and DOT&PF maintenance shop	1
Parks Highway	
Build a bypass for the Parks Highway around Willow	3
Build a 4-lane highway “all the way”	2
Iditarod Race Restart	
Leave restart on the lake	2
Iditarod should go away	1
Other	
Flight patterns of lake and runway mixing?	1
After move, make the existing airport area an industrial area	1
DOT&PF/State of Alaska should not have an opinion/vested interest. It is a <u>public</u> agency.	1

* Indicates the number of times the same comment was submitted.