



# Kotzebue Airport Master Plan Update

AKSAS Project No. 62960, Federal Project No. 3-02-0160-013-2009

## MEETING NOTES

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SUBJECT: Kotzebue Airport Master Plan Update

PROJECT NO.: *AKSAS Project No. 62960*  
*Federal Project No. 3-02-0160-013-2009*

GROUP: Public

DATE: Wednesday, January 28, 2015

TIME: Agencies: 2 to 3 p.m.  
Public: 4 to 7 p.m., presentations at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers

MEETING OUTREACH: See Table 1. Meeting Outreach

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 31 people signed in

MEETING MATERIALS: Aerial photo, comment sheets, PowerPoint presentation, boards with improvement alternatives

STAFF PRESENT: *ADOT&PF*: Jeff Roach, Alvin Werneke  
*PDC Engineers*: Patrick Cotter, Bryan Hill  
*Brooks & Associates*: Camden Yehle

### MEETING INFORMATION:

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Two meetings were held, one in the afternoon for agency representatives, and one in the evening for members of the community. At both meetings attendees were greeted at the door and asked to sign-in. Staff members were on hand to answer questions. An overview presentation of the project was given and questions from attendees were answered throughout.

The project team recorded the following comments, which have been categorized and alphabetized by subject. Team responses are in *italics*.

#### Access

One person asked if the road would remain around the west end of the airport. *Pat Cotter (PDC) responded that this project would not affect the road.*

#### Emergency Response

One person discussed safety issues about loose gravel at the Kotzebue Airport that caused the U.S. Coast Guard to not want to develop a base in Kotzebue. *Jeff Roach (ADOT&PF) explained the U.S. Coast Guard was using the crosswind runway, which has a gravel surface. They*

*indicated they are interested in building a base of assistance further north than Kotzebue at this time.*

An attendee wanted to make sure that medical evacuation (medevac) operations had enough space at the airport. *Pat Cotter responded that medevac personnel are currently met on the East Ramp and occasionally on the West Ramp and the team has not heard of a need for more space.*

### Floatplanes

A question was asked about which floatplane area would be more economical. *Pat Cotter responded that the lagoon would be more economical because no land would need to be purchased and no dredging would have to be done. Alvin Werneke (ADOT&PF) added that pilots would like to keep the floatplane area at the lagoon because it is more protected from inclement weather.*

### Funding

One person asked about the improvement schedule and if funding is secured for these improvements. *Pat Cotter answered that the team will be back in May to present the revised alternatives and the proposed timeline for prioritized improvements. The Master Plan Update would be completed this summer. Funding would have to be secured for each project.*

One person was concerned that the current fiscal situation with the Alaska government might affect funding for the projects in the Master Plan. *Jeff Roach responded that the FAA funds most of the projects and the state match is small enough that we have not had difficulty obtaining it.*

### Lease Lots

Several people expressed concern about the capacity of the Alaska Airlines terminal and available vehicle parking. *Jeff Roach explained that ADOT&PF couldn't invest in private lease lots, including the Alaska Airlines lease lot. He added that the amount of parking is sufficient, according to FAA standards, for the current use even though it is very busy when full planes come in.*

Several people asked if there is room for Alaska Airlines to expand. *Jeff Roach answered that there is some room for expansion on the existing lease lot, even if it is not the expansion that the community would like to see. Pat Cotter added that in the past a combined terminal has been looked at that could house multiple carriers, but it does not seem to be an option without support from the air carriers. Jeff Roach added that because of state leasing rules ADOT&PF could not force companies to move from one lease lot to another. The northeast apron with a new taxiway would open up space for development of new lease lots. Moving the current small aircraft parking would open up a new apron-front lease lot as well.*

Most of the improvements being suggested are for smaller aircraft. The commenter wanted to know if any of the commercial airlines were considering expanding operations. *Jeff Roach*

*replied that space at the airport for smaller aircraft is currently limited and demand is increasing by about 1% per year, but large aircraft operators have not indicated they have any plans for expansion.*

Several questions were asked about possible uses for airport property. A restaurant, a fish processing operation, and meat freezers were mentioned. *Pat Cotter explained that because it is airport property, which is supported by FAA funding, all lease lots and other airport property must be used strictly for aviation purposes. The exception is if the restaurant or other amenities are inside the terminal and supported by the leaseholder. There are also exceptions for non-aviation use areas on airports.*

One person wanted the team to evaluate alternatives based on which one encourages airlines to provide a better experience for passengers. *Pat Cotter explained that comments would be taken under consideration as alternatives are revised. Improvements in the master plan would be designed to facilitate expansion of lease lots. Therefore if companies choose to do so, they could expand or improve their operations.*

One person asked about moving the large aircraft parking instead of moving the transient aircraft parking. There was concern about safety of passengers. *Pat Cotter asked if he meant adding a combined use terminal. He said yes. Pat Cotter explained that Alaska Airlines seems disinclined to invest money in a new terminal.*

A commenter asked if a fire lane is required in front of the Alaska Airlines buildings because when cars are parked in front there is not room for emergency response vehicles. *Jeff Roach responded that the fire marshal is responsible for approving building plans for lease lots and all of the building plans have been approved.*

A question was asked about where airport/airline employees are supposed to park. *Jeff Roach responded that airport/airline leaseholders are required to provide employee parking on their lease lots. Lease lots are inspected to ensure parking rules are followed.*

Two people expressed concerns that the master plan does not take a community-oriented look at the airport that would encourage airlines to make flying in and out of Kotzebue airport more pleasant for passengers. *Pat Cotter answered that the team will be looking at optimizing available lease lots as part of the update, but they cannot force leaseholders to make improvements.*

An attendee asked if anything will be done to increase efficiency at the airport and if it is possible to move buildings. *Jeff Roach responded that it is usually not practical to relocate leaseholders. Lease lots cannot be restricted, which can result in cargo operations alternating with passenger operations.*

One person asked if the two big hangers would stay. *Jeff Roach responded that they would*

*remain.*

### Material Sites

One person asked where the materials would come from to build the improvements identified in the airport master plan. *Jeff Roach said that the construction contractor typically chooses the material site. The sites would be known after each project is bid and the construction contractor chosen.*

### Miscellaneous Issues

How does the 1% growth rate in aircraft traffic compare to other hub communities? *Pat Cotter responded that Barrow's growth rate is a bit higher due to oil industry growth in that area.*

An attendee asked what an apron is. *Pat Cotter responded that it is a generic term that means where airplanes park.*

A question was asked about freight costs. *Pat Cotter responded that is not likely that any of the projects outlined by the Master Plan Update will affect the cost to ship freight. Typically the cost of freight responds to other factors, like fuel cost.*

### Navigation Aids

An attendee asked if the navigation towers on the hill were still in use and if any could be removed because they are limiting development on the hill. *Jeff Roach explained that as non-directional beacons (NDB) stop working the FAA decommissions them. The Very High Frequency Omni-directional Range (VOR) equipment will be in place for the next five to ten years, but after that satellite based Global Positioning System (GPS) units will be the preferred navigational method. GPS does not depend on ground-based equipment.*

### Other Airport Projects

One person asked what remains of construction that has been occurring at the airport. *Jeff Roach responded there are gates and lighting to be installed and the hillside must be stabilized, but the majority of the construction is complete.*

One commenter arrived late and expressed concerns about making a road in his back yard, which is where he sets a salmon net. He also did not want blocks where there is gravel because that is where he sets his net. He indicated he would like to attend more meetings. *The team reassured him that the road is not going through as part of this project and he will still be able to set net near his home.*

### Parking

One person asked what the definition of "adequate parking" is. *Jeff Roach answered that the FAA has a formula for the number of parking spaces for a particular lease facility type. If we try to build more parking than the formula calls for, the FAA may not want to fund the project.*

One person asked if more long-term parking would be in the plan. *Pat Cotter answered that long-term and common area parking is being looked at in the Master Plan Update. Alvin added that the 5th Avenue extension parking lots always have spaces but people don't like to walk far.*

### Runway Length

One person asked if there was a way to use a heavy-duty culvert to extend the runway on the east end of the lagoon. *Pat Cotter responded that it is actually the hill with the cemetery that limits the length of the runway because it is in the way of the approach.*

One person commented that ADOT&PF did the right thing keeping the channel open at the east end of the runway.

An attendee asked why ADOT&PF is only providing a 6000-foot runway. Providing a regulation runway is part of providing a public service and it is disappointing to not see it in the Master Plan. *Pat Cotter responded that airlines would like to have 7000 feet of runway but the option was explored in a previous study and was determined to not be a feasible option. The current runway length meets the requirements for the design aircraft, 737-700, used for the update. The team asked Alaska Airlines if they plan to fly bigger aircraft into Kotzebue and they do not at this time. If the runway surface is contaminated with ice, snow, or water they have to either cancel the flight or fly in with a lighter load to accommodate the increased stopping distance.*

An attendee asked if Boeing 747 jets would be flying into Kotzebue in 20 years. *Pat Cotter responded that Boeing 747's are not part of the current 20 year forecast at this time.*

### Safety

Airport Way is fully developed up to the airport but there is a narrow 300-foot section that connects to 3rd Avenue. 50-75% of traffic comes to the airport from 3th Avenue, not from 5th Avenue, through this section including cars, freight, and pedestrians. The commenter stated that he had nearly been run over there. *Jeff Roach responded that Airport Way is on airport property and can be evaluated as part of the Master Plan Update.*

An attendee asked which projects would be the near-term projects. *Pat Cotter suggested realigning the taxiway would likely be a near term project. Jeff Roach added that projects related to safety and non-standard geometry issues, like aircraft parking adjacent to the crosswind runway, would be addressed first.*

One person was concerned about airplanes hitting birds. *Pat Cotter discussed the challenges of having water all around the airport. Jeff Roach added that a wildlife management plan is in*

*place, but there are other things that might be done. For example the space between the apron and the runway could be filled in to mitigate some concerns about bird strikes.*

### Utilities

Planning should include upgrading and rerouting utilities. The utility systems are aging and some are built on filled-in tundra. Coordination with ADOT&PF and the FAA on rerouting the force main last summer was appreciated. *Pat Cotter replied that as the planning process moves forward, budget estimates will be done and the utility improvements will be evaluated at that time.*

### Email comment about lighting

Email comment: For the last five years I have been in regular contact with both the Airport Manager, Calvin Schaeffer, and the Western Operations Maintenance Manager, Evan Booth, regarding the lighting on the approach roads and parking areas on the public side of the airport. At any given time half or more of the streetlights are burned out. Even the NW [north west] facing light on the Sand Storage Building which helps illuminate the Fifth Avenue approach went for months without re lamping. Currently there are three (3) street lights out as well as the one on the Sand Storage Building.

Let me point out that these are NOT Kotzebue Electric Assn./City of Kotzebue street lights, KEA is quick at re lamping their burned out street lights.

The explanation I have gotten was that there was an underground cable problem and wait until Summer. But then the following Fall they were still out. The last explanation was that DOT/PF was relying upon the leaseholders to illuminate their areas. The irony of this excuse is that as soon as DOT/PF installed the central street light in front of Alaska Airlines, the building side-light on Bering Air was removed, Frontier turned one of their two lights off, and FBX permanently turned off their outside light.

These are, frankly, lame excuses. But the problem has not been fixed and this is a public safety hazard and only gets worse as the airport traffic increases.

There also needs to be better illumination of Airport Way from the Third Avenue side. A street light was added to an existing pole which contains the heat trace control box and service which helped (it was really a dark morass before) but there is a need for another light at the intersection and possibly a third by the Bering Air Brown Hanger.

Table 1. Meeting Outreach

Date	Outreach method	Description
1/7/2015	Postcard mailer	Inviting the public to the open house
1/12/2015	State of Alaska Online	Inviting the public to the open house

Date	Outreach method	Description
	Notice	
1/14/2015	Display advertising in <i>Anchorage Daily News</i>	Inviting the public to the open house
1/14/2015	Public service announcement request sent to GCI Cable, KINU-FM, and KOTZ-AM	Sent with request to broadcast announcement inviting public to meeting
1/14/2015 1/27/2015	Constant Contact email	Provide email invitation to the meeting to project stakeholders
1/14/2015	Facebook ad	Inviting the public to the open house
1/15/2015	Display advertising in <i>Arctic Sounder</i>	Inviting the public to the open house
1/16/2015	Display advertising in <i>Fairbanks Daily News Miner</i>	Inviting the public to the open house
12/15/2015	Project website	Project specific website hosted by ADOT&PF & formatted in accordance with Department specifications

**Related documents on file:**

- Advertising
- Display Boards
- Handouts (Comment Sheet, Fact Sheet)
- Letter to Agencies
- Postcard Mailer
- PowerPoint presentation
- Public Service Announcement
- Sign in Sheets