


MEETING OUTCOME SUMMARY

	Participating Groups: DOT&PF, DOWL, Uqaqti Consulting, FAA, Alaska Division of Forestry, Copper Valley Development Association, 40 Mile Air, Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, Doyon Ltd, Office of Rep. David Eastman, Mendas Cha-ag Native Corporation, Alaska Gateway School District, Alaska Power & Telephone, Upper Tanana Region Residents
	Meeting Subject: UTAPS Project
	Public Meeting Date: December 1, 2022
	Communication Method: In-person Open House & Teleconference Line
	Location: Tok Senior Center
	Logged Date: 12/6/2022

ATTENDED BY:		ORGANIZATION:	
Judy Chapman	Chief Planner, DOT&PF	Sara Lucey	Project Manager, DOT&PF
Melissa Osborn	Project Manager, DOWL	Tom Middendorf	Assistant Project Manager, DOWL
Joy Huntington	Public Lead, Uqaqti Consulting		

AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Lead Person</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1.	Welcome	Melissa Osborn	
2.	Presentation (during the presentation, DOWL shared the findings of their research – the only plausible regionally significant airport would be the Tok Junction Airport). Several Tok Junction Airport alternatives were presented.	Melissa Osborn and Tom Middendorf	
3.	Questions/Comments	All	

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES

1.	<u>Tok Junction Airport Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tok Junction is important for both medivac and regular medical appointment flights. • The US Customs staff have to drive on a narrow road to get to Northway and aircraft can't always get to Northway. They would be better served at Tok. • Will these improvements to Tok Junction Airport score high for funding or not? Response: DOT&PF submitted a project for this airport about 5 years ago. It scored a bit low and did not move ahead.
----	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ski/gravel runway at Tok is very important for commercial and private users. It handles a large share of the flights at the airport. DOT has done a good job with making this runway available. • The new clinic in Tok is a center for flying patients in and out from the region. This should increase priority for funding. • Funding decisions should also consider Tok Junction Airport’s role in serving drivers who transit through Tok. Example of a busload of tourists who needed to be flown out because of Covid issues. • Would the US Customs or Flight Service Station relocation to Tok Junction Airport influence funding for airport improvements? Response: <i>It could have some influence, but would not make or break funding decisions.</i> • Are there plans to fence the Tok Airport? Response: <i>None at this time</i> • The crosswind airstrip would be beneficial to existing Tok users. Mixed opinions on whether it should be gravel or paved, maybe initially gravel, and paved later. • The crosswind runway would not be long enough to serve air tankers. Response: <i>No, it will not.</i> • Would Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR’s) developed for firefighting affect the Tok airport? • How many operations would there be by Fire Service if relocated to Tok? Response: <i>Based on averages from the last 10 years at Tanacross, there would an average of 23 landings and 23 takeoffs per year. Each year, operations numbers would depend on the number and intensity of fires in the region.</i> • How will tanker aircraft fill up with water at the Tok Airport? • There formerly was a large fire on the land where the runway extension would occur. • The Tok Musers Association may have trails in the area of the runway extension. • A year-round airport in Tok is better than trying to get to Northway. • TCC Healthcare center – a new clinic in Tok – add to the report. It’s drawing more regional patients in, more medevacs out, too but runway length hampers this.
2.	<p><u>Tanacross Airport Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanacross deterioration is bad and unusable. • There have been car races at Tanacross Airport that should be allowed to continue.
3.	<p><u>Division of Forestry Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanacross Airport is deteriorating dramatically and will become unusable in the next 5 years. We have estimated it would cost \$18 million to resurface just one runway. We may have to relocate operations to Fairbanks, with much longer response times to fires in the Upper Tanana area.
4.	<p><u>General Questions and Feedback:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team needs to reach out to Tanacross Inc. Response: <i>We have and a Tanacross Inc. member is on the phone.</i> • The mine will generate ore trucks on the highway about every 15 minutes. This will cause more people to choose to fly to Fairbanks from Tok Junction Airport, to avoid mixing with heavy truck traffic. • FAA reported that the planning, funding and development process is lengthy. Commenter does not see how FAA would fund a 5,000 foot runway since the runway length would be based on needs of the critical aircraft – the most demanding aircraft

	<p>with at least 500 operations per year. Response: <i>Agree. We think we could justify FAA funding for about 4,000 feet. The additional 1,000 feet would likely have to come from other funding sources.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underground power on the airfield has failed in the winter in the past. Will this be replaced? Response: <i>Yes. We are also aware of issues with the regulator building.</i> • Will taxiways be gravel or paved? Response: <i>Paved</i> • What is the definition of Census Designated Place? Response: <i>It is an area defined by the US Census from which data is collected about population, employment and other statistics. It often includes unincorporated areas that have undefined boundaries.</i> • How many flights per year does Customs handle at Northway? Response: <i>Did not have the information in the meeting but subsequently checked interview notes where US Customs reported 172 contacts from aviators in 2019.</i> • What are the funding sources? What is the timeline for the funding? • A ski strip is important because asphalt is impossible for ski equipped aircraft and can be difficult for tundra tired aircraft. • What is the preliminary scoring? I have seen a proposed crosswind runway in the plans for 30 years. • 7 miles of narrow road limits practicality for Northway. • Will there be a crosswind survey completed? • Will the ski strip go away? • Helicopters are an issue. • Leif Wilson added medivacs out of Manh Choh will be a need. • DOT&PF needs to initiate tribal consultation. • Civil Air Patrol has a 206/182/172 and 15 cadets. Looking for hangar space.
5.	<p>Comments submitted following the open house via email from the Copper Valley Development Association:</p> <p>Good Evening All,</p> <p>I participated in the meeting last night, there was a lot of good information, comments, and further clarification for this project. The TOK Airport seems to be the best choice as the Regional HUB, given the evaluation criteria for the UTAPS. The meeting provided info on the process and insight that would/could/should help us move forward with an updated GKN Plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GKN Planning is part of the Alaska Interior Plan, through this planning exercise the DOT was looking at a regional airport for the Upper Tanana Region - GKN cannot serve this area, too far and is its own regional Airport for the CRV. 2. For FAA Funding the system for obtaining money is as follows (Judy please let me know if this is accurate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual funding is pooled from all FAA/DOT airports and goes into one pot. • DOT calls for airport projects, DOT planners from each region (?) take those packaged project's and score them. • Then they go to the Aviation Board and each regions planners presents their own projects.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the 16-point criteria the highest scoring projects get funded. Safety, Economic, Quality of Life, Aviation Hazards, Erosion, Maintenance, etc. Judy, I didn't catch them all. Would you fill in the blanks? • The Aviation Board is looking for scores of 120+ • Typically, about 5-6 from each region get funded. Judy, I assumed the funding is for the actual work not additional planning, yes? <p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, airports on the road system score lower • The number of flights they look are currently not flights we plan on in the future • Positive Project Impacts: Life Flights/Forestry - Firefighting (requires a minimum 5000' runway to support airtankers). I am sure there are more. • FAA funding for a 5000' runway is unlikely, think about implementing runway length in phases. • Boarder Station - It is not likely they want to move. I am not sure if GKN would be a candidate for this • Other funding sources are likely to be required, monies earmarked through appropriations or private companies willing to invest. • Are there other federal or State agencies that can provide funding? <p>I believe our next step for the airport is to put together an MOA for a GKN updated Master plan through the Alaska Interior Plan, yes?</p> <p>My general sense is this will require partnerships with many agencies, private industry and the community coming together to bring this to fruition.</p>
6.	<p>Comments submitted following the open house via Email from the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce and board member of the Copper Valley Development Association:</p> <p>Greetings and thank you all for a very well planned and organized description of the UTAP Project Proposed and presented this eve. I am the Pres. of the Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce as Well as a Board member of the CVDA, and I have a Chamber member seated on the newly organized RPO committee that DOT Commissioner Mr. Ryan Anderson proposed we organize and we accomplished this year as the first in Alaska, that has a DOT board member (Judy Chapman) seated as required . We have Very Much Interest and questions yet in the Scope of Your Survey and I would like to receive updates via emails on the progress of this project to XXX.</p> <p>I personally support the concept of the Tok location in its design and effectiveness, however I would like to encourage the needs of and/or, express the similar needs within the Copper Basin as mentioned in the comments made during the meeting tonight in respect to medical emergencies.</p> <p>My last comment would be to ask if there has been any consideration of diversifying the development of this scope of work and improvements and developing the advantages between communities and to balance the needs of outlying areas in relation to distance and lack of infrastructure that may work better in developing your planning of designs that may work better in some locations than others?? There are many desperately needed</p>

	transportation needs in Interior Rural Alaska. Each community has very relative needs and very significant advantages to each of their locations, I like to compliment the areas that are better suited and more likely to succeed in respect to be better at taking care of our daily needs (and each other) and Alaska's Top Notch natural punches that she can and will show us when least expected. Respect!			
COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS/TASKS:		PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Target Date	Completion Date
1.	None.			
MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED				
1.	12.01.22 - UTAPS Update Presentation			

The following email thread contains communication between the Copper Valley Development Association, Sean Solie of Uqaqti Consulting, and Judy Chapman of DOT&PF Northern Regions Office:

On Fri, Dec 2, 2022 at 8:01 AM Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov> wrote:

No worries, I am so sorry for all the confusion on this one! Thanks for reaching out.
Judy

Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2022 6:08 PM

To: Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov>

Cc: Thomas Middendorf <TMiddendorf@dowl.com>

Subject: Re: Reminder: Open House - Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study

Thank you so much Judy. No need to be sorry, I appreciate your information and edification for me. It is I that is sorry for pestering you with my lack of understanding. Be well and talk to you soon.

On Dec 1, 2022, at 5:00 PM, Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov> wrote:

Hi,

The main study question from the 2003 study was whether Tok or Tanacross would be the regional airport for the upper Tanana region – Tok is small but in an in-town location close to businesses and industry. Tanacross is 12 miles away and has two 5,000 foot runways, but is not state owned and has degradation and contamination issues, so the study recommended a closer look at these two airports in particular. Then it wrapped in Northway and Gulkana to look at whether Gulkana could serve as the sub-region’s regional airport (from afar) or if Northway could – it’s also 5000’ and 40 miles from Tok.

I don’t have the report in front of me right now (I’m in Tok) but we’ll look at the population numbers and make sure they are accurate and clear!

The designation of an Upper Tanana area airport as the “regional” airport won’t detract from Gulkana being the regional airport for the Copper Basin sub-region, there can be two regional airports. The report ultimately found the distance between the upper Tanana and Gulkana to be too great for Gulkana to adequately serve the Upper Tanana subregion in addition to the Copper Valley area.

The regional airport determination for the Upper Tanana won’t, in any case, affect funding currently earned by Gulkana and distributed on projects system wide.

I apologize this is confusing! I would have done the outreach and talking points differently in retrospect.

Judy

Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2022 10:46 AM

To: Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov>

Cc: Thomas Middendorf <TMiddendorf@dowl.com>

Subject: Re: Reminder: Open House - Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study

Judy,

Thank you for the clarification and I guess I misunderstood this. So the distance is between Gulkana and Tok, correct? And the population is only Glennallen and Gulkana?? Not Copper Center, Gakona or any of the other communities? Is Gulkana Airport even in consideration for the two areas?? It should be considered for the entry airport into the State and Country given its size and condition, but is the Upper Tanana airport consideration something completely separate and are we not in running for anything??

Sorry I am confused and trying to figure this out. I have some important mtgs next week regarding Gulkana AP

On Thu, Dec 1, 2022 at 10:36 AM Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov> wrote:

Hi, Gulkana is a regional hub right now for the Copper River valley region. That’s documented in the 2003 Copper Valley Upper Tanana Regional Airport System Plan. What is lacking is a regional hub for the upper Tanana region, which the focus of this study. There are regional hubs all throughout Alaska, depending on the area, and they are meant to serve the main population centers in their areas. Thanks for the feedback on the population and distances – we will look into those and make sure they are accurate!

(cc-ing our contractor Tom here, in case he wants to offer more background on the study).

Judy

Judy Chapman, CM, ACE

*Deputy Director of Planning
Division of Planning & Program Development
(907) 451-5150*

Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2022 9:43 AM
Cc: Chapman, Judy (DOT) <judy.chapman@alaska.gov>
Subject: Re: Reminder: Open House - Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study

Maybe I'm missing something, but the numbers here do not seem to reflect the population of the area around Gulkana, the improvements they need in Tok, etc. still would barely bring those airports to the existing Gulkana Airport, and distances are skewed.

Why would the State of Alaska even consider the costs associated with the renovations on those airports when it makes more sense to utilize the existing Gulkana Airport as a regional hub airport with minimal money? What gives here and what am I missing? This has been an exclusionary and selective vetting process, without proper consultation or consideration, much less accurate data, for the evaluation of Gulkana Airport as the HUB airport and entry-way into Alaska via Canada.

Can someone enlighten me? Thank you.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Sean Solie <sean@uqaqti.com>
Date: November 30, 2022 at 4:31:49 PM AKST
Cc: Project Team <info@uppertananaairport.com>
Subject: Reminder: Open House - Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study

Good Afternoon,

Just a friendly reminder that the Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study (UTAPS) Open House is **tomorrow, Thursday, December 1st from 6 PM to 8 PM at the Tok Senior Center.** Please see the attached flyer for more meeting details. There is also an option to attend via telephone for those of you unable to attend in person. For those attending via phone, the conference line info is: **+1 (888) 585-9008, conference room #: 629-796-293.** For technical assistance, contact: Lindsay Johnson at (907) 378-1335.

Lastly, the presentation for tomorrow is also attached to this email. If you are unable to join in the meeting but would like to provide comments, please do not hesitate to connect with us via the UTAPS project email at info@UpperTananaAirport.com.

We hope to see you there!

Thank you,
Sean Solie

Project Manager
Uqaqti Consulting
sean@uqaqti.com

(M): 1-907-687-1184
www.uqaqti.com

