

## Aviation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

November 20<sup>th</sup> 2023

Anchorage, AK

And Virtual via Zoom

### Meeting was called to order 1:14 by Steve Strait

**Present:** Steve Strait, Adam White, Dennis Parrish, Gideon Garcia, Frank Neitz, Marilyn Romano, Mike Reeve, Dave Wilson, Jim Dodson

**Others Present:** Craig Campbell (AIA), Angie Spear (AIA) Dylan Blankenship (DOTPF), Jeremy Worall (DOTPF) Troy LaRue LaRue (DOTPF), Kari Hebert (DOTPF), Merle Acres (Public) Aaron Robinson (Public) Paul Khera (DOTPF)

**Minutes and Agenda:** Steve motioned to change the agenda in the following ways, add rural lighting status, move public comment to the end of the agenda, and the fuel assessment to be added under construction updates.

Gideon seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved.

The minutes were motioned to be approved by Marilyn, and seconded by Gideon. They were adopted.

### Airport Governance Committee Update:

In a recent committee meeting, Marilyn Romano discussed the composition of the group, mentioning members such as Garcia Steve and Jim Dodson. The committee includes individuals from the Alaska International Airport System Airport Affairs Committee and other key figures. Romano highlighted the importance of obtaining consensus from top leaders, including Commissioner Ryan Anderson and Tyson Gallagher, the Governor's chief of staff. The committee aims to explore alternative governance structures for the Anchorage and Fairbanks airports. Meetings with officials have been scheduled to seek support for pursuing a hub and address concerns related to aviation safety and operational challenges. The focus is on presenting concrete examples and emphasizing the economic significance of aviation in the state. The committee is on track with its timeline, with upcoming meetings with Commissioner Anderson and the Governor anticipated to be crucial for the next steps in the process. Tom George inquired about the scope of the preparatory work and whether the challenges faced by the International Airport system could have relevance to smaller airports, considering past issues at 139 airports. Marilyn Romano acknowledged the challenges at smaller airports and emphasized the need to stay focused on the International Airport system. She expressed the view that addressing the unique structure funded by carriers is crucial. While acknowledging challenges at smaller airports, Romano suggested keeping the current focus and later engaging in conversations about other airports. She mentioned ongoing efforts by the Governor's task force on food security and logistics, indicating discussions on rural infrastructure improvements. Romano highlighted the importance of addressing one piece of the pie at a time and commended Marilyn's comments on taking a good first step in the current initiative.

### **Gap Analysis Committee Update:**

Adam White provided background information on the committee's discussion in August regarding the State's efforts to identify services, issues, and problems within the aviation infrastructure, particularly those not directly maintained by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The committee aimed to support a gap study, but due to the infrequency of meetings, they missed the timeline for a resolution. Subsequently, a draft report was issued in mid-September, with Troy expected to provide more details.

Ryan Marlowe played a crucial role in advancing the report, and Adam White emphasized that the issue seemed to have self-corrected. He outlined key points from the report, such as focusing on identifying areas needing additional resources, real-time monitoring of outages, and digitizing aviation data for real-time access. The recommendations included sharing digitized information and leveraging portable devices for better information utilization.

Adam White expressed that, given the current status, there is no need for a resolution from the committee. The report, though valuable, rendered the need for further committee action unnecessary. He highlighted the importance of supporting the ongoing process and utilizing the insights gained from the study to understand and address shortcomings in the aviation system.

### **FAI Update:**

Angie Spear, Fairbanks Airport Manager, provided updates during the meeting. The primary project focused on the general aviation apron and taxiway reconstruction. While most paving is complete, transformer delays pushed completion to early summer 2024. Temporary power sources were arranged for winter. The rental car invitation process expanded to 8 counters, including Alaska 4 by 4. Summer air service was slightly below pre-pandemic levels, but fall numbers exceeded 2019 by 10-15%. Air service development conferences aimed at charters from Japan Airlines and service to Korea and China were discussed. Cargo tech stops and Amazon's up-gauging were noted.

The new air traffic control tower project is progressing, and regulatory testing for the employee screening program is underway. Staffing challenges persist, especially in skilled positions. Despite efforts, low pay and state requirements hinder recruitment. A contractor was hired for airport operations support due to significant vacancies. Emergency contracts with Dowel for training were executed, focusing on operational readiness during diversionary events. New hires include a safety officer and environmental manager.

During the discussion, Marilyn inquired about the qualifications for jobs, specifically mentioning challenges in hiring due to both qualifications and pay. Angie Spear shared that the qualifications for Operations officers haven't been reviewed for a long time. She highlighted a case where a qualified individual was deemed unqualified by the state due to lacking seven years of experience, despite having relevant certifications. Marilyn then questioned about whose responsibility it is to review such qualifications. Angie clarified that it falls under the Department of Administration, and class studies can take about two years, with uncertain outcomes. Troy expressed the request for a study, emphasizing the similarity between Operations and SSO roles. Steve suggested bringing HR staff to the job site for the February meeting to address questions or concerns.

## **ANC Update:**

Terri Lindseth, one of the Deputy Airport Directors with 18 years of experience, presented a detailed and comprehensive overview of various summer construction projects at the airport during a recent meeting. She began by introducing herself and mentioning that she oversees safety, security, and operations, and would provide insights into the recently concluded projects.

### **1. Summer Construction Projects:**

- Terri highlighted the rehabilitation of remote overnight spots, specifically spots 3 and 4, which were right outside her office. This project involved joint seal replacement and concrete spell repairs.
- Taxiway improvements in South Ear Park were discussed, including the relocation of tug roads and extending the Whiting taxiway Zulu. This multi-year project started during the summer and is expected to continue for a few more summers.
- Concourse BG rehabilitation focused on improving the apron space around Concourse D, addressing issues such as reselling joints and repairing cracks.
- Land-side repairs included work on Postmark Drive, involving milling and paving. This project is part of a multi-year plan, with one more summer left to complete.
- Hood and Lake Shore Drive rehabilitation efforts were also highlighted, encompassing repairs to Aircraft Drive and upgrades to the baggage handling system. Wall finishes were replaced, new carpet installed, and common-use passenger processing systems at the ticket counter were upgraded to allow any airline to utilize the counter.
- Terri provided information about the parking garage construction, mentioning that it is officially open for the holidays. She indicated that there is one more summer of construction planned for the upper level (fourth floor) of the garage.

### **2. Traffic and Airline Services:**

- Terri shared data on cargo traffic, emphasizing that Anchorage ranked number one globally in landed gross weight, surpassing Memphis and Louisville. She also discussed passenger traffic projections, expecting a slight increase in the coming summer.
- New airline services were announced, with Alaska Airlines introducing nonstop service from Anchorage to JFK and Anchorage to San Diego. Delta Airlines also announced the seasonal resumption of flights from Anchorage to Detroit.

### **3. Ongoing Developments:**

- Terri provided updates on the master plan, stating that the airport is almost halfway through the two-year project. The third public meeting is scheduled after the New Year, focusing on alternative analysis.
- She mentioned the opening of the 49th State Brewery in the terminal's large session space and upcoming RFPs for remaining terminal spaces.

#### 4. **Airside Projects:**

- Terri discussed major airside projects, including the Northlink project, Fedex Expansion Project, and Alaska Cargo and Pool Storage project.
- The air traffic control tower relocation project was highlighted, indicating quarterly meetings with the FAA team and expected start dates for construction.

#### 5. **Weather Challenges:**

- Terri addressed recent weather events, emphasizing the challenges faced due to heavy snowfall. Despite delays and cancellations, the airport remained open throughout, and the airfield maintenance team was recognized for their outstanding performance.

#### 6. **Environmental Sustainability:**

- The airport's initiatives towards environmental sustainability were discussed, including a solar power project under evaluation and participation in an airport carbon accreditation program.

#### 7. **Fun Facts:**

- Terri concluded her report with interesting statistics, such as the amount of snow received, the snow hauled by the airfield maintenance team, and the use of de-icing chemicals.

Adam White expressed his concerns in response, acknowledging that he doesn't anticipate immediate action but wanting to record his comments. He mentioned a growing number of complaints from membership organizations regarding dissatisfaction with the management of slips, tie-downs, and enforcement of sublet. Adam referred to a recent user group meeting at Lake Hood where attendees expressed dissatisfaction with the responses to their questions. He emphasized that he consistently hears concerns from various people, but the specific issue of slip and tie-down management is gaining more prominence recently.

Steve asked Adam about the complaints regarding slip and tie-down management at Lake Hood. Adam shared that he heard multiple complaints and pointed questions during a recent user group meeting. There were concerns about unauthorized use of slips, waitlist length, and dissatisfaction with responses from Lake Hood management. Adam suggested issuing an annual report, including details like the number of people losing medicals, turnover of slips, and waiting list numbers. Steve suggested that stakeholders, create a list of questions for an annual report, and Adam agreed to resend the list of questions from the recent meeting.

#### **FAA Reauth:**

The FAA has received a new authorization bill and is currently operating on an authorized extension through December 31st, with a continuing resolution through January 19th. The FAA is seeking Congress to either extend the existing authorization to match the continuing resolution or set a later date. Ideally,

a new FAA reauthorization legislation would be passed. The Alaska Region Airports Division is currently liquid for only bill money, so bipartisan legislation is crucial for funding. The absence of a reauthorization could impact various programs, especially if the situation prolongs. Currently, the focus is on funding through the bill program, and the FAA is monitoring the situation closely. If the reauthorization is further delayed, it may have detrimental effects on the overall program. The need for government funding beyond short stopgaps is emphasized. Questions on the FAA pre-authorization report are welcomed.

#### **MCIP:**

Troy discusses staffing challenges and mentions the expanded mission-critical pay in rural stations, which is helping with recruitment and retention. Training and hiring still take time, but optimism exists. Concerns about demoralization due to potential staff losses are addressed with a focus on positive changes in rural settings. A break is suggested for questions on staffing. The discussion shifts to upcoming LTC negotiations, with acknowledgment of real issues in labor treaties and crash local settings. Mission-critical pay is discussed, highlighting its temporary nature and potential removal, causing challenges across different locations. Internal conflicts arise when certain stations receive the benefit while others don't.

#### **AWOS:**

AWOS transfers are progressing well, with 8 out of 9 systems currently being transferred to the FAA. They were initially broadcasting in non-fed mode, proving their functionality. Tweaking is needed before national system broadcasting begins. The AWOS program is viewed as a success, and there is room for growth. Concerns arise due to the expiration of the organization on December 31, impacting programs like AWOS. New FAA reauthorization is awaited to clarify the future. The program looks into alternative weather technology with advanced mobility, aiming for a potential \$200 million contract by February. New LOC ID for Newtok is pending, and discussions about relocating the local ID to Target are ongoing, considering the pandemic's impact on transitions. Maintenance will continue on the old Newtok runway, coordinated with the FAA for airspace management.

#### **Winter Operations:**

Troy addresses the critical issue of winter operations, recognizing the difficulties faced by some airports. He points out the evolving factors contributing to the challenges, such as climate change, shifts in fleet composition, equipment modifications, and updated chemical usage practices. These changes prompt a thorough review of the existing snow and ice control plan.

Troy emphasizes the significance of the snow and ice control plan, embedded in the airport certification's Chapter 7. The plan encompasses 139 airports and is crucial for maintaining operational standards. In light of technological advancements, Troy expresses a preference for prioritizing chemical solutions over sand for de-icing purposes.

To address these concerns comprehensively, a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, covering a broad spectrum of topics including staffing, resource allocation, and chemical application strategies. The

intention is to actively discuss and implement powerful changes promptly, indicating a proactive approach to enhancing snow and ice control operations across the airports under consideration.

Bob inquired as to any specific airports

Troy responds to Bob's inquiry about airports facing winter operation challenges, specifically mentioning Barrow and Deadhorse airports. These airports share similar conditions and challenges as other Northern Alaska airports. Notably, Barrow and Deadhorse have effectively embraced chemical usage for snow and ice control, contributing to their success. The leadership team, including John Olson from Barrow, has been actively involved in addressing these challenges. Troy underscores the seriousness with which they are approaching snow and ice control, expressing the intention to assess and improve practices across all airports.

Troy delves into the core issues surrounding winter operations, emphasizing the importance of addressing challenges faced by various airports. He starts by highlighting the collaborative efforts among airports, where successful ones share information with those struggling to cope with winter conditions. Troy expresses the need for job sharing and shadowing, allowing staff from well-performing airports to assist those facing difficulties during the winter season.

The conversation then shifts towards the critical topic of excessive sand causing damage to aircraft engines. Troy provides insights into the complications arising from this issue and mentions the filing of substantial claims for engine replacements. He underlines the financial implications of such incidents and how they could impact budget considerations.

The broken ice truck becomes another focal point of discussion. Troy encourages the prompt reporting of critical equipment failures to ensure a timely response. This leads to a discussion of the upcoming Ops meeting, where a comprehensive agenda is outlined. The meeting aims to address staffing issues, equipment challenges, and the specific problem of runway condition monitoring.

Troy emphasizes the importance of adhering to runway condition monitoring requirements, friction testing, and using appropriate equipment. He shares plans to include all superintendents, leadership, and airport managers in the initial Ops meeting, with subsequent meetings involving all airport managers and staff members. The goal is to collaboratively work towards improved winter operation strategies.

The conversation concludes with a mention of training opportunities for the summer, exploring the possibility of a snow-supposing event in Anchorage for the airport staff. Troy expresses the hope of recording future meetings and discusses the potential reintroduction of procedures allowing airlines to assess runway conditions themselves

Don Graves expresses his appreciation to Troy and the team for their efforts in addressing the challenges related to winter operations. He acknowledges that many of the concerns raised have either been resolved or are actively being worked on, indicating a proactive approach to problem-solving.

One of the key concerns raised by Graves revolves around the need for consistency in runway conditions and sanding practices. He emphasizes the importance of uniform reporting of runway conditions across different airports to ensure a standardized and safe experience for aircraft operations. Consistency in

reporting becomes crucial, especially during winter operations, where varying conditions can impact flight safety.

During the discussion, Graves brings attention to specific issues at Atkasuk Airport (ATK) and Unalakleet Airport (UNK). The broken grader at ATK is highlighted, and Graves seeks an update on its status, as it plays a crucial role in maintaining runway conditions. Additionally, he raises a safety concern at UNK, where reported NOTAMs indicated different runway conditions than what was observed upon landing. This highlights the need for accurate and consistent information dissemination to ensure the safety of flight operations.

The conversation also delves into the topic of sanding practices and equipment. Graves inquires about the presence of devices in sanders that prevent large sand particles from being dispersed on runways. This is a critical aspect of winter operations, as proper sanding is essential for effective de-icing and maintaining safe runway conditions.

### **Rural Airport Lighting:**

Troy La Rue discusses the task assigned by the Commissioner to address lighting issues in the rural airport system and correlate them with ongoing APEC projects. The team has successfully identified and addressed lighting problems, ensuring that they are included in nominations during APEC meetings every six months. This proactive approach allows them to respond to the concerns raised by communities unable to operate due to lighting issues.

While recognizing their achievements, La Rue suggests the potential need for a subcategory of Airfield projects focused on maintenance, with an emphasis on heavy maintenance. This proposed category, involving around \$3 million investment, aims to address issues like refreshing lighting systems and gravel surfacing. The goal is to capture any maintenance needs that may be missed or require swift attention.

La Rue highlights the challenges faced by some airports with antiquated lighting vaults, emphasizing the importance of addressing such issues promptly. The team collaborates with APEC to streamline the process of working on significant projects, ensuring agility in pursuing necessary improvements as they arise.

Adam White inquires about the factors contributing to lighting issues in rural airports, focusing on the aging infrastructure and potential vandalism. Troy responds, stating that vandalism is the primary lighting issue, followed by challenges related to ground movement causing ground faults. He mentions an emergency lighting program that has aged out but is being refreshed with new test systems. The discussion includes the availability of emergency lighting systems and contact information for the Newtok realignment project. Troy also updates on master plans for Barrow and Deadhorse, involving the Department of Defense's participation, showing interest in expanding their presence in Alaska.

### **Dashboards:**

Dylan shares a dashboard displaying the current AWOS status, pointing out issues marked with X. The discussion covers the challenges faced in manually updating the dashboard and efforts to automate the process. Adam White inquires about the availability of the dashboard to the public and highlights its significance in addressing gaps in communication systems. Blankenship mentions the involvement of

urban air mobility and expresses the hope that the dashboard will be publicly accessible. The link to the dashboard is shared in the chat for reference.

**Public Comment:**

Merle raises concerns about representation on committees and seeks information on those representing general aviation, particularly in relation to signatory airlines. He questions the decision to provide state land to the FAA for a new tower without public notice, citing constitutional requirements. Merle emphasizes the lack of representation for the general public on committees, especially for airports like Lake Hood seaplane base. He discusses the recent rate increase for seaplane base permits, highlighting the disparity in rates and usage on the airport. Merle questions the fairness of rates, suggesting that all users should contribute their fair share.

**Board Comment:**

Bob Hajdukovich expresses concern about the state's liability in incidents like the Nauk incident, particularly for Part 121 airlines. He questions when the state becomes liable for such events, pointing out the seriousness of the incident. Mike Reeve adds comments on several topics. Firstly, he discusses Essential Air Service (EAS) funding, expressing the importance of maintaining funding levels as costs rise. He notes the unique challenges faced by Alaska, where smaller communities may receive EAS for only two flights a week.

Additionally, Mike Reeve highlights the need for ground-based receiver stations in areas lacking radar coverage, citing the installation of one such station in the Copper Valley. He emphasizes the importance of these stations for tracking aircraft in areas with limited visibility. Lastly, Adam White provides further details about the FAA's efforts to install nine new ground-based ADS-B stations across Alaska. He mentions the expansion of coverage in various regions, including Gulkana, Kodiak, the Tanana Peninsula, and the Yukon Flats.

Adam White acknowledges the challenges but appreciates the collaboration between state officials and the FAA to address issues and improve aviation infrastructure.

Jim discusses the ongoing issue of wage disparity in Fairbanks and emphasizes the need for a solution. He acknowledges the work of Marilyn's committee but emphasizes the importance of involving the legislature and the governor in finding a timely solution.

Frank from Bethel provides updates on the weather conditions, mentioning the freeze-up of the Cusco Quain River and completed runway work in Kipnuk. He expresses anticipation for a significant winter at Shefonik.

**Meeting Adjourned at 3:40**



DRAFT