

**Aviation Advisory Board Teleconference Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2019**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Lee Ryan at 11:02 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members: Jim Dodson, Steve Strait, Lee Ryan, Mike Stedman, Gideon Garcia, Dennis Parrish, Mike Reeve, Marilyn Romano, Frank Neitz, Bob Hajdukovich, Bob Kaufman,

DOT&PF: Commissioner MacKinnon, Deputy Commissioner John Binder, Troy LaRue, Megan Byrd, Kenny Gallahorn

OTHERS: Joe Sprague, Tom George - AOPA, Len Sloper - RAVN

AGENDA and MINUTES – Dennis Parrish moved to accept agenda and minutes, Gideon Garcia seconded. Motions passed unanimously.

Chairman Lee Ryan Remarks

Welcomed Steve Strait back to the Aviation Advisory Board. Steve will represent the interests of the general aviation industry.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner MacKinnon discussed the department's highway and aviation operating budget. In the last 4 years the department has experienced a 16 percent budget reduction, closure of maintenance stations and eliminated positions. The Commissioner said additional cuts could impact public safety. As to today the department's operating budget has passed both the house and senate with different budget numbers and is now in conference committee.

Questions for the Commissioner - Dennis Parrish said sometimes there are aviation issues outside of the department's scope that may deal with the FAA or other aviation system issues. He asked how best to get those issues into the governor's briefing and what assistance is available. Commissioner is happy to work with the congressional delegation and the governor's Washington D.C. office and suggested getting those issues to him via DC Binder.

Jim Dodson asked about the status of a joint session the commissioner proposed with all three of the department's boards (highway, aviation, and marine). Commissioner said this meeting is still planned but on hold until the marine highway's budget and results of an RFP analyzing the Marine Highway System are finalized.

DC Binder Statewide Aviation Update

Discussed Governor's directive to investigate options to save \$47,000 in rural airport maintenance costs and possibly reduce liability within the state's inventory of airports. What led to this directive were conversations between DOT&PF and OMB to provide better aviation resources allocation. The report is due to the governor's office by June 1st and will be partly educational including information on airport costs, revenue sources, and rural airport and highway maintenance costs. Most of the airports on the list fall into a category that does not require regular maintenance and some are being recommended for potential closure. These airports are the department's recommendations to the governor awaiting further action from his office. This is the start of a

broader conversation about other airports in the system that may be removed from inventory. There is a task in the aviation system plan that will look at broader criteria for changes.

Jim Dodson asked why some airports were on the list that had zero cost to the state in 2018? DC Binder said that the department looked at previous years when costs were incurred and some airports were selected based on cost and/or liability concerns. The goal is to select enough airports to meet directive and to also look at other airports in the system. At some point a decision will be needed if it makes sense for the state to be the owner/operator of some airports and to continue maintaining them.

Mike Stedman asked what the state's plan is regarding liability issues with some of the seaplane bases that are in disrepair. Will the state decommission them? DC Binder advised more research is needed.

Mike Reeve asked about the Naknek airport - isn't this airport and South Naknek tied together with a single school with kids flying back and forth- are school districts separate now? Troy answered no they aren't separate. DOT&PF doesn't own enough property interests at this airport so it isn't eligible for federal funds; the lighting system is beyond its useful life with no available state dollars; and there are boundary crossing issues. Lee Ryan asked if the department talked to the school district about this recommendation. He said as a department we should not dictate a communities needs we should communicate with them to figure out their needs. Troy advised that the South Naknek airport is eligible for airport improvement funding and there is a surface maintenance project scheduled for this summer.

Mike also asked if there is a 2nd tier list because of the possibility that many airports on this list will receive huge public feedback resisting recommendations. If the current list is scaled back but next? Troy said within the directive we're trying to define purpose and need within state's airport system. There will be a much longer process to determine if the state needs all of these airports and do they have the right level of maintenance. DC Binder said there is a longer list of airports recommended for potential designation change. DC Binder would like any additional board comments by end of week.

Gideon Garcia requested more airport information in a spreadsheet with high level justification of recommendations.

Lee Ryan commented on Goose Bay airport noting that this airport allows aviation to happen because it is a heavily used training airport, and potentially could have saved lives as an emergency alternate. Sheep Mountain should be looked at again since it provides a place to land if weather prevents flying through the area.

DC Binder advised a DOT&PF Policy & Procedure is being written for future airport property status changes.

DC Binder discussed the updated aviation economic impact study paid for by the FAA. The executive summary of the study has been distributed but the longer report is still being finalized.

Jim Dodson asked if the next updated study could include a review of how the rural system contributes to the international system – there is an interconnection between the two.

Lee Ryan said it would also be helpful to review the distribution of cargo coming into Alaska starting at the Port of Anchorage.

Board Discussion

Bob Hajdukovich talked about industry issues; ADS-B deployment and making sure there is full coverage across the state, weather cameras, and runway conditions. Concern was expressed over reliability of maintenance at rural state airports and safe runway conditions. By 2020 the FAA will require all aircraft to have

ADS-B. DC Binder advised that AWOS funding is a priority – there will be 13 new AWOS systems coming online in the near future that will be funded when the final guidance is issued by the FAA.

Frank Neitz said that fencing and gate projects are finishing up at the Bethel Airport. Parallel runway on east side will be closed for the season because of runway problems due to global warming. Other airports with runway issues are Toksook Bay, Nightmute, Tununak, and Newtok.

Marilyn Romano asked for an update on PFAS. DC Binder said that 8 high priority airports have been tested. There have been changes to the number of compounds initially tested to now be in line with EPA guidance. Several communities are receiving drinking water. State will continue to do more testing on identified airports.

Bob Kaufman asked if the board's previous offer to help DOT&PF with leasing road blocks and generating leasing revenue is still on the table. Lee Ryan, believes the board should continue to have a conversation with DOT&PF about generating revenue especially since leasing revenue is not at the level expected and he believes there is more economic opportunity available. Lee also wants to have a conversation on reevaluating the DOT&PF organization structure for cost savings and efficiencies.

Steve Strait would like board to receive an update on trends and budget with the Alaska International Airport System. He would also like an update from Lake Hood Seaplane Base about float slip waiting list update and any Lake Hood initiatives. Would also like to know what happened at Kulis and the 200 veterans that weren't able to get access for an event last weekend.

Gideon Garcia working with post office officials to review bypass mail and reestablishing in-state procedures and policies with air carriers.

Jim Dodson discussed challenge with airport land leasing and the lack of flexibility in state policy and the FAA. There is economic opportunity to produce commerce in rural Alaska and it is not the same as the Lower 48. Conversations are needed with the FAA to make things work in Alaska and that may include changes to rules.

Lee Ryan said that Toksook Bay is a high risk airport with significant permafrost damage. Other airports with reoccurring problems include Kipnuk, Kwethluk, Newtok, and Emmonak. Pavement runways have a PMI that must be met but majority of state runways can't be paved and are gravel. State needs to identify a better way to engineer gravel runways in this environment. Maybe UAF research can help with redesigning better arctic runways. Jim Dodson said this topic was discussed years ago and offered to assist with restarting a conversation with UAF and DOT&PF.

Lee asked how soon items are needed for the aviation system plan to start a socio-economic impact study on how rural airports benefit the international system. Troy said within next 2 weeks. Lee formed a sub-committee with Steve Strait, Jim Dodson, and Lee Ryan to provide input and help frame discussion.

Public Comments

Tom George suggested a survey with people doing business with DOT&PF might help with the leasing concerns and hear their responses to any unmet economic potential at the state's rural airports.

Lee and Steve discussed having 2 hour meetings on a more frequent basis since face-to-face meetings have been limited. Next board teleconference is tentatively planned for July.

Meeting adjourned at 12:24 p.m.