

# Aviation Advisory Board Meeting Summary

March 25, 2009 in Juneau, Alaska  
DOT&PF Juneau, Commissioner's Conference Room

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Chairman Lee Ryan called meeting to order at 9:18am.

**PRESENT:** Lee Ryan, Al Orot, Jim Dodson, Tom George. **EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Ken Lythgoe, Bob Jacobsen

**ABSENT:** Jack Barber, Mike Salazar, Ken Lythgoe

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Christine Klein (DOT&PF), Rebecca Cronkhite (DOT&PF), Tom Middendorf (DOWL HKM), Ocie Adams (DOT&PF), Ted Anderson (JNU Airport), Jim Lomen (FAA), Lynette Campbell (DOT&PF), and Joy Journey (AACA)

Lee Ryan opened the meeting with a moment of silence to recognize the contributions and friendship of Board Member Dan Klaes.

Deputy Commissioner Klein verbally shared the letter from Wilbur O'Brien stating that he would not be seeking a new term on the board, but wished to vacate his chair to a younger person with fresh perspective.

Attendee introductions were made.

A change to the agenda was suggested, and an item for discussion was added: Board Membership.

**MINUTES:** Tom George moved and James Dodson seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented, with removal of an extra "period" (.) at the start of the last sentence in paragraph #9.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS:** Roger W. Wetherell, Chief Communications Officer for DOT&PF joined the meeting and discussed the press event scheduled for 11AM. Christine provided an overview of the expected scenario during the press event. Wetherell distributed a paper outlining basic considerations for answers during an interview.

**AASP UPDATE:** Tom Middendorf began an update on the Alaska Aviation System Plan, supported by a slide presentation and hard copies of the presentation for those in attendance. Discussions occurred throughout the presentation, but the update points will be covered in this document uninterrupted for clarity. Included in the update were:

- An overview of the system planning process in accordance with FAA AC 150/5070-7
- The AASP short term schedule
- The AASP website [www.AlaskaASP.com](http://www.AlaskaASP.com) and the documents and map features that can be found there
- An introduction to the runway length study
- The M&O work group is meeting and its priorities and evolution were introduced
- M&O Action Item A: Commodity costs
- M&O Action Item B: Federal unfunded mandates were discussed at length

- M&O Action Item C: Listing of airports most frequently requested to have extended operational time
- M&O Action Item D: Prepare data to illustrate lost ground on deferred maintenance needs
- Pavement conditions
- Postal Hub work group
- What's Next

**ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY:** The final document, titled “The Economic Contribution of the Aviation Industry to Alaska’s Economy” was included in the Board packet and reviewed by the group. Tom Middendorf reviewed survey demographics, the measurement process, and the significance of the findings.

#### Purpose

Jim Dodson stated that we see communities, particularly those in rural Alaska, being run down and their ability to educate and provide for the health of their people is diminishing. We need to get a more significant handle on that situation as it is crucial. Tom George seconded the statement and suggested that it is important to anecdotally show what the aviation contributions are to the communities, even so far as between Alaska’s urban and rural areas; we must understand this well here in Alaska before we can explain it in Washington DC. Middendorf commented that it has been discussed to bring Northern Economics back in to tell the social aspects of aviation. Dodson added that the transportation system does not only exist to drive an economy but to support a lifestyle. We want to “close the loop” on how Alaska’s transportation system is unique.

#### Data/Facts/Figures

Tom George passed around a document, “Understanding Alaska’s People, Economics, and Resources” completed in May 2006 by ISER. He will get copies to all attendees. He would like to see the AASP result in something along the same lines as this document.

Christine Klein asked that the data be presented with a qualifier that contains the “confidence level” or standard deviation for the accuracy of the data provided. Middendorf will research and provide this information.

#### Unfunded Mandates

Jim Lomen sought clarification regarding the unfunded mandates, and Rebecca clarified that these referred to the portions of the mandates that were not funded by the FAA. For instance, once a piece of equipment is mandated, even though the FAA purchases the equipment, the training for the use of that equipment is unfunded. The water rescue plans were discussed as an example. Tom George further clarified that the rulemakings come out and the State must comply but within a budget that has already been set, with no recourse but to increase the M&O budget for the future.

Tom George expressed his belief that the AASP should move forward because M&O needs are high and this Board needs to engage to insure the transportation system is healthy. Rebecca further clarified that the training example for the water rescue was not the training of the State’s M&O staff, but training for the community.

Dodson expressed that there are also unfunded mandates for the highway and marine highway systems. There simply are not enough funds to go around and it is important that we adequately

tell our story. There are Part 139 airports that are not being funded or accepted, and they will not change even if this is pointed out. The FAA is facing huge costs and obstacles. Two villages have to be served by one runway. We should not let someone else dictate what our transportation system should be (i.e., the FAA, USPS or any other agency). Alaska should determine what our system looks like and how much money goes to the airports, highways and marine highway.

Christine Klein suggested that today's meeting should focus on the economic and fact sheet updates, specifically the economic impact of aviation and airports in Alaska. The board moved forward to consider the information presented. It was pointed out that the data relies upon information from 2007 and a question may arise regarding current measurement.

The handout regarding commodity costs was discussed. The text contains the word "salt" which shall be amended to the correct word "urea." It was decided to not distribute this flyer during meetings in Juneau this week.

**MEDIA EVENT:** Rebecca Shearer from KTOO and Juneau public radio joined the group, along with Commissioner von Scheben. The Commissioner shared an anecdote with the group and then summarized findings of the AASP Economic Impact study. Comments were shared and questions entertained and responses provided regarding the study.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:** Commissioner von Scheben shared a vision dealing with the cost of doing business in villages and proposing village clustering of services. In a simple study comparing three villages clustered and connected by road, costs to support one airport, power plant, school, health clinic, and community center for all three communities would reduce costs almost 2 to 1. Clustering could be based upon economics, i.e., Nelson Island has gravel and Bethel needs gravel. The concept was discussed by the board in terms of not only the financial maintenance impacts, but the economic and social ramifications. Lomen commented that FAA limitations on runway lengths for airports would be impacted with clustering, because a longer runway could be justified if it served a larger group of people. The group expressed support of the clustering concept.

#### Deferred Maintenance

Tom Middendorf discussed the deferred maintenance handout. Lee Ryan suggested that the State must establish a priority system for the deferred maintenance items, as safety factors must be receive high consideration. Runway surface conditions directly impact safety. Christine Klein explained how the AASP studies are providing the data to support these decisions.

Comparison of the current deferred maintenance to that of five years ago was discussed. Clarification was sought regarding the varying monetary allocations to deferred maintenance during the past two years and the 2010 budget. Mike Coffey was ill and unable to attend this meeting, but can address those specific questions when he is available.

#### M&O Work Groups

Rebecca and Tom Middendorf indicate that probably three meetings will be held before they will start assessing performance measures. Tom George suggested that the Board needs to understand what the philosophy of the DOT&PF is in relation to rating or assigning value to specific items like the CIP dollars. Christine suggested we address this at the next meeting when Mike Coffey can help us understand. Funding from the economy, capital funding, and the economic stimulus funding needs to be understood.

Jim Dodson suggested that the Board needs to understand as much as possible to develop a philosophy for a transportation system and set guidance on how the State wants to operate in the future. Monies are allocated on a life safety system and it will be hard to develop a policy that remains outside of regional politics, as they keep changing. Christine clarified that for the projects, the FAA essentially sets priorities and picks the projects based upon the national scoring system.

#### Leasing

Title 17 rural leasing regulations have been re-written and were signed on March 23<sup>rd</sup> by the Lt. Governor and will take effect on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Christine recapped the events and process, reviewing a three-page document in the board packets. The Statewide Aviation staff are to be commended for completing three regulation re-writes in less than one year. A press release will be prepared shortly by Roger Wetherell.

#### Postal Hubs

The postal hub work group activities and discussions with Steve Deaton of the USPS were reviewed.

#### Meeting Content and Preparation

Al Orot commented that the Board meetings involve a large amount of information that must be covered in a short period of time. Consideration was requested for allowing more time to thoroughly process the topics raised during meetings. The Board has agreed to meet every three months and are given a lot of data. Data analysis from the last meeting is not concluded and tasks completed, and we start another meeting with more data. Al would like to see that we come together a bit more often and communicate more.

Jim Dodson suggested that if the Board is planning to assess specific projects or criteria that potentially holding a two-day meeting to focus solely on that topic until it is completed might be beneficial.

#### Meeting Summary

Discussion on process-the board agreed that Joy could send summary to Christine's office and they would edit, format, and distribute. The board would have one week to comment and then the draft summary would be put on the website.

**The Next Meeting date has not been determined.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:40PM.**

Respectfully submitted by Joy Journey, AACA.