

Aviation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2020
Juneau, Alaska

Meeting called to order by Chairman Lee Ryan at 10:00 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

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

DOT&PF: Commissioner John MacKinnon, Deputy Commissioner John Binder, Division Operations Manager Troy LaRue, Communication Director Meadow Bailey, Development Specialist Linda Bustamante, Southcoast Region Division Director Pat Carroll, Southcoast Region Transportation Planner Paul Khera

FAA: Kristi Warden, Director Alaska Region Airports; Rodney Clark, Deputy Director Alaska Region Airports.

OTHERS: Tom George, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA); Scott Van Valin, Owner of Island Air Express; Robert Venables, Southeast Conference Executive Director; Jane Dale, Executive Director Alaska Air Carriers Association.

AGENDA and MINUTES – Dennis Parrish moved to accept agenda; Gideon Garcia seconded. Dennis moved to adopt last meeting minutes; Bob Kaufman seconded. Motions passed unanimously. Approved minutes [posted](#) to website.

Chairman Lee Ryan Remarks

Welcomed and thanked all for participating in the board meeting. He then asked the board to participate in a “Shape Quiz” a fun quiz designed to get you thinking about how different we are and to better understand how we all approach work with a style and perspective that varies from our colleagues.

Commissioner MacKinnon Update

The Commissioner talked about current budget impacts – the reduced revenue from motor fuel tax resulted in the deletion of positions and closures of maintenance stations. If SB 115 (an act relating to the motor fuel tax) passes, an additional \$30+ M could be realized and this revenue would go towards the department’s Maintenance and Operations (M&O) of the Highway and Aviation systems, specifically toward deferred maintenance.

The administration’s directive to the department to review M&O at some rural airports and reduce maintenance where it makes sense, is still being addressed.

The North Slope Borough has expressed interest in owning and operating some airports on the slope – Barrow, Deadhorse, and Pt. Hope – the department is meeting with borough representatives to discuss options.

The Alaska Marine Highway System needs to be operated more like a business. The Governor has formed a working group of 9 citizens to provide recommendations on how to best accomplish this.

The commissioner supports looking at ways to connect rural communities with shared services including building roads to one primary airport.

Commissioner is reviewing projects throughout the department looking for opportunities to finish projects that have “been on the books” for a long time. He supports the project delivery system referred to as CMGC – where the department brings the contractor into the project early having the contractor involved in the design stage of a project that should ultimately result in an expedited delivery.

NORAD/FAA TFR – Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR)

Jeeja Vengal, FAA ATO System Operations Security Senior Rep. to 11AF Commander, called into the meeting to advise the AAB of issues with General Aviation in Alaska violating TFR’s. A TFR is a type of Notices to Airmen (NOTAM) that is issued to segregate aircraft from a specified area. TFRs may restrict air travel due to hazardous conditions, special event, or a general warning for the entire national airspace for reasons such as national security. In Alaska, they are mostly issued for VIP movements, wildfires, and search and rescue. The U.S. Air Force and the FAA are dedicated to educating the Alaskan flying community by participating in outreach events designed to further understand and awareness of TFRs to increase safety and compliance.

The board appreciated the briefing and provided some suggestions for working with general aviation stakeholder groups such as the Alaska Airmen’s Association and AOPA. Educating pilots could start with surveying GA pilots for input and suggestions; a traffic alert transmitted by ANC approach would notify pilots; and Public Service Announcements on the importance of checking NOTAMs. Three busy airports supporting GA in the Anchorage area are Birchwood, Palmer, and Wasilla – use signage and airport tenants to distribute information and educate pilots.

DC Binder Update (power point attached)

- PFAS/PFOA – one of the key ingredients in firefighting foam is an emerging public health concern that has been found in public well water sources close to airports where the foam has been used. Cleanup efforts are underway for contaminated ground water. A Class Action Lawsuit has been brought against the state. Alaska is on the forefront of addressing these pollutants and legislation has been proposed (SB176) relating to duties of the Department of Environmental Conservation and PFAS testing, drinking water, and the use of fire fighting foam.
- AIAS Ground Transportation/TNC Fees - the international airports (ANC & FAI) will be assessing rates and fees for TNC’s (Uber & Lyft) that will soon be public noticed with an anticipated implementation date of July 1, 2020. Additional ground transportation rate adjustments are planned with an expected implementation date of January 1, 2021.
- Aviation Revenue – no changes to current structure of collecting revenue at airports owned by State of Alaska. SB 128 (an act requiring legislative approval for certain state charges, rentals, and fees relating to aviation) is problematic for the department since rates and fees are regulated by the FAA’s grant assurances. The bill is not expected to receive any legislative hearings.
- Rural Airport Maintenance – the department continues to review the reduction of maintenance at rural airports where it makes sense. There will be conversations with communities and air carriers to sustain and support commerce.
- North Slope Airports - the department is in preliminary discussions with the North Slope Borough about acquiring ownership of properties and acquiring airports – specifically Barrow, Deadhorse, and Pt. Hope.

- Aircraft Registration Fee – the department is still gathering information on implementing an aircraft registration program. Board members asked if the FAA’s data base should be able to add where a/c are based and recommends the department strongly ask for this existing program to collect additional information to prevent a new program and fees from being implemented.
- Bethel ADSB – there are discussions between the FAA, air carriers, and other federal agencies about requiring aircraft operating in the Bethel area to install ADSB. There have been many “near misses” in the area.

UAS/Drone Program

Ryan Marlow, DOT&PF’s Statewide Aviation UAS Program Coordinator, provided the board an overview of the department’s current drone program; how drones can perform digital surface modeling at airports; the establishment of no drone zones; and new safety guidance for drone operators. One potential application of a drone is for bird mitigation at rural airports.

Scott Van Valin, Owner/Director of Operations for Island Air Express, gave the board an overview of his concerns with the Klawock Airport. As the primary air carrier with numerous flights into this airport he is very concerned about bird strikes that he stated are getting worse. He provided the board a detailed report of why Klawock needs to be an attended airport. (copies attached)

Robert Venerables, Executive Director of the Southeast Conference, stated he supports the recommendations to increase M&O attendance at the Klawock Airport.

Alaska International Airports Update (FAI & ANC)

Angie Spear, FAI Airport Manager, gave the board an overview of projects underway at the airport. Some of the larger projects include replacement of the escalator scheduled for installation in October 2020; airfield lighted signage; shortening of runway 2R/20L to 4500. American Airlines is launching Chicago to Houston service in May until September. The airport is reviewing its preparedness plan for Coronavirus. Airport tenant Brooks Fuel is holding an auction that should be of great interest to the flying community.

ANC Update - Alex Moss is the new ANC Operations, Safety, and Security Manager – he spoke to the board about his new position and the additional staff that will be hired for safety management and emergency operations. The airport has a communicable disease plan that is serving as the basis for the Covid 19 epidemic. They are working closely with passenger and cargo airlines; tenants; and federal agencies.

Mike Lesmann – legislative update

Mike reviewed:

[SB128](#) – An Act requiring legislative approval for certain state charges, rentals, and fees related to aviation; and providing for an effective date.

[SB115](#) – An Act relating to vehicle registration fees; and relating to the motor fuel tax.

[HB240](#) - An Act relating to pollutants; relating to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances; relating to the duties of the Department of Environmental Conservation; and relating to firefighting substances."

[HB223](#) - An Act naming the Vietnam Helicopter 1 Pilots' Memorial Bridge."

Dom Pannone, Administrative Services Director – Dom has recently been appointed to this position. He gave the board a power point presentation on the Highways & Aviation Operating Budget. The highways and aviation component for FY2021 is \$129,215.6 M. He then reviewed the fund sources for this revenue that includes general funds, motor fuel tax receipts, capital improvement project receipts, and aviation fuel tax revenue. He reviewed the budget comparison from FY18 Mgmt. Plan to FY21 and aviation vs highway actual expenditures. Some impacts of the FY2020 budget caused by unrealized motor and aviation fuel tax receipts included the deletion of 8 full-time and 2 part-time positions; reduction in expenditures of surface chemicals and sand for lower priority roads. The department has identified \$57.6 million dollars of aviation deferred maintenance.

FAA Update

Kristi Warden, Director of the Alaska Region Airports, discussed AIP funding (Airport Improvement Program) noting that grants will be coming quicker to airport sponsors. This excellerated process will result in grants delivered by January 1 for the next FFY. There is \$400M in supplemental AIP funding and Alaska should receive ~\$30 M.

The Alaska Region advocates on the national level for Alaskan airports and supports state policy decisions. The Quinhagak Airport sponsorship is being discussed between the community and State of Alaska. The community wants the state to take over ownership and management again due to numerous reasons. The FAA is aware of all discussions and will continue to work with the state for a path forward to include emergency repairs.

The FAA is holding a conference May 13th & 14th, in Anchorage that will be attended by Kirk Shaffer, FAA Associate Administrator for Airports. The board is welcomed to attend – agenda will be resent to all. (this has since been cancelled)

Regional Directors Update

Pat Carroll, Southcoast Region listed off airport projects in this region, including a new taxiway at the Klawock Airport and a Master Plan update for the Unalaska Airport that is out for bid.

Wolfgang Junge, Central Region, reviewed projects underway in this region. The Newtok Airport project should be completed by fall 2022. Maintenance at the Portage Creek Airport will be discontinued – this is one of the airports identified in the initial request from the administration to identify what airports could have M&O reduced.

Ryan Anderson, Northern Region, reviewed projects including the Barrow Airport pavement project and Pt. Hope Airport's runway realignment project.

Board Discussion

The Unalaska Airport's recent aviation accident and subsequent reduced air service has made the airport a top legislative priority for the community. The department is having thr airport's master plan updated and the RFP is currently out for bid.

Mike Stedman made a motion for the board to issue a resolution directing DOT&PF to immediately address the bird situation at the Klawock Airport. The board decided not to go forward with a resolution at this time instead to form a committee consisting of Mike Stedman and Bob Hajdukovich. They will provide the board a recommendation that will then go to the department.

The Board reviewed topics they will be discussing with legislators on Thursday:
SB 176 PFAS; SB115 Motor Fuel Tax; Divestment of Airports; Aviation Deferred Maintenance - \$57.6 M;
Quinhagak Airport – airport needs emergency funding to operate at a minimal level of safety; the annual
funding commitment from the state for federal matching funds for aviation is approx.. \$12 million using the
95/5% matching formula.

Board Comments:

The board would like a copy of the Aviation System Plan’s Airport Classification Study – Linda to send link.

Lee Ryan is serving on the Governor’s AMHS board and will provide briefs to the AAB as available.

In regards to the divestment/reduced M&O at rural airports, it was suggested DOT&PF talk to small
communities before airport changes are implemented.

Aviation Insurance premiums have increased and this could impact the number of air taxis operating in Alaska.

Airplane accidents in the Yukon-Kuskokwim area have increased partly due to the challenging environment.

Placards for seats backs should be considered for air taxis with messages about Real ID and the COVID - 19
virus.

Runway Safety Program PSAs were successful last summer – department may want to continue airing PSAs in
rural Alaska to maintain awareness of this program.

There is a concern about the FAA relocating services out of state and consolidation. Important to keep Airports
Division here in Alaska and board may want to issue a resolution.

Public Comment

Jane Dale, Executive Director, Alaska Air Carriers Association, asked the board to review the runway condition
report. The condition of the runways listed on this report are of great concern to Alaska’s air carriers. Bob
Hajdukovich is further evaluating this list for the board; and Troy LaRue with DOT&PF will request the regions to
also include what the short-term maintenance plan is for each airport. An updated list will be sent to the board and
AACAA.

Meeting adjourned 5:16 p.m.

Thursday Re-Cap:

The Board met with legislators and Lt. Governor Meyer discussing the vital role and much needed support of
Alaska’s rural airports.

Some specific discussions:

Senator Bishop - Manley Airport needs AWOS and a webcam

Senator Costello office – requested letter from board with intent language for the Senator to use supporting
additional AWOSs across the state.

Senator Hoffman – discussed Quinagak Airport and runway’s unsafe conditions. Board to send letter to DOT&PF urging department to take back ownership and operation of the airport and to identify emergency funding to immediately resolve the unsafe conditions caused by the inoperative lighting system and runway surface irregularities. (letter attached)