

TACOMA NARROWS AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING NOTES
FEBRUARY 7, 2004

Members Present:

John Howell, Facilitator	Andy Markos, PAC member
Larry Bielstein	Catherine Mitchell
Dennis Cunneen	Hugh Morgan
James DePew, PAC member	Ras Nielsen
Carl Geist	Brad Pattison
Mark Hoppen	Marge Pearson
Terry Lee	Rob White
	Ann Whittaker

Others Present:

Deena Turmo, Tacoma Narrows Airport Manager
Mike Kruger, Pierce County Staff
Chip Vincent, Pierce County Staff
Cheryl Carlson, City of Tacoma Attorney
Catharine Hall, City of Tacoma
Rich Mueller, Tacoma Narrows Airport Manager
Jay Derr, Buck & Gordon
Cynthia Stewart, ADR Options Consulting, Inc.
Carol Key, FAA
John Shambaugh, State of Washington DOT Aviation Division
Joe Faherty, interested citizen
Dan Flynn, interested citizen

NOTES OF JANUARY 29, 2004

The notes of January 29, 2004 were approved as circulated.

AIRPORT OPERATIONS & MASTER PLAN

Deena Turmo, Airport Manager, gave a presentation on the Tacoma Narrows Airport operations and master plan.¹ She described the existing conditions at the airport, historic trends and future forecasts, how the capacity of the airport to handle future forecasts is evaluated, findings of the analysis, alternatives for addressing the forecast, and Airport Master Plan recommendations. In addition, Carol Key, FAA, provided information about the FAA's perspective on various issues raised.

Questions and comments following the presentation included the following:

- The last formal based aircraft survey was done in 1997; however, airport management is confident there has been no increase in based aircraft since then

¹ Copies of the slides used are available upon request.

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- because the Airport Operations Manager surveys informally; also there have been no increases in hangars or tiedown rentals.
- Business jet operations provide revenue to the airport and to Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) through their fuel purchases and other services, but small General Aviation (GA) operations are significant to the ATCT to document need for Tower services.
 - There was discussion about the proposed safety area improvement that would result in construction of a lid over Stone Road. There was discussion about the rationale for the proposal and alternatives. It was mentioned that this issue was discussed by citizens during the development of the airport master plan.
 - Historically, the Airport has operated at a loss. The City of Tacoma general fund contributes an average of \$250,000 annually to operating the airport. The loss has been greater in the last two years due to deferred maintenance and high legal and consulting costs. Some of the deferred maintenance that has been addressed includes exterior surface and roof repairs to hangars, water system improvements, deferred county drainage fees.
 - Debt service for recent loans to the Airport for property purchases (Crossings) have not yet been included in the financial data provided.
 - The FAA does not contribute to the operating cost of the airport, only to specific capital projects.
 - All of the sales tax generated on the airport goes to Pierce County and Gig Harbor; the City of Tacoma does not receive any of it.
 - Although the demand forecasts will eventually need to be updated as a result of post September 11, 2001 events, the downsized forecast would not affect the facility needs and Plan recommendations. The safety considerations, current design of aircraft, and revenue needs of the airport are what drive the Plan and related capital projects. A shorter runway length (i.e., if the displaced threshold option had been selected for the final Plan) would require changes in aircraft operations and FAA does not consider this to be a viable alternative. It was also mentioned that the length of the runway has not changed since the airport opened and that a change in runway length could be confusing for pilots who are familiar with the current flight patterns.
 - The FAA Master Plan requirement is designed to help the airport owner make decisions. It is based on consideration of the unconstrained demand. Compatibility with the surrounding area, including local zoning, is one of the considerations for the airport.
 - The FAA recommends that any minor Plan modifications prior to the next Plan update be handled as a stand-alone “ALP Update” with a short report. If there is a need to do a full Plan update, the FAA will help fund it. However, the FAA would hope that a full update would not occur for at least five years.
 - The FAA requires the airport sponsor to do whatever it can, including taking legal action, to comply with grant assurances and keep the airport viable. (Note: additional information about consequences of non-compliance with grant

AIRPORT OPERATIONS & MASTER PLAN

- assurances is still pending).
- Safety area compliance became a national priority following the Burbank and Little Rock aircraft accidents. While previously many non-conforming safety areas were “grandfathered”, the new national concern gave rise to requiring safety area compliance all across the country. Tacoma Narrows is the last one in this region to get in compliance.
 - FAA’s position is that the City has an obligation to meet the need for new hangars if there is demand.
 - The bottom line for the Master Plan at this Airport appears to be 1) safety area compliance; 2) new hangars. With regard to development north of Stone Road, FAA wants the airport to have the opportunity to add development if it needs to do so to support its financial viability but expects the development to be compatible with adjacent land uses. Local zoning is one of several considerations that FAA considers when asked to comment on development proposals. There were a number of questions attempting to clarify FAA’s position about local zoning.
 - FAA requires the airport to lease land that was purchased with FAA funds for fair market value. This is the highest and best use for the land based on surrounding uses. There were several questions attempting to clarify how highest and best use is determined.
 - The Air Traffic Control Tower is contracted because this airport has a relatively low number of operations. The decision to contract vs. staff with FAA employees is based on an FAA cost-benefit analysis. The contract is handled by the Air Traffic branch of FAA, which is a different unit than Carol Key is in.
 - When the Tower is closed at night, the pilots use standard FAA radio communication procedures that are used in airports with no Towers.

PIERCE COUNTY COMMENTS ON AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

Mike Kruger handed out and described a paper that outlines issues in which the County does not agree with the Airport Master Plan. He explained that some of these comments have been made since 1999 but that the issues may have been modified by recent meetings with the City of Tacoma. The paper is background for future discussions by TNAAC. The paper was divided into two sections. The first three pages list the issues that County and City staff have been unable to resolve in their discussions. The final three pages list issues that the respective staffs believe can be resolved relatively easily. The major unresolved issues center around several topics:

- Which jurisdiction has authority to control development at the airport, given conflicting language in state law?
- What limitations, if any, may the County impose on an “essential public facility” as described in the state Growth Management Act (GMA) statutes?
- Should the master plan reference the potential for better airport operations with

PIERCE COUNTY COMMENTS ON AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

a 6,000 ft. runway?

- Airport Development: What uses should be allowed at the airport? Should development occur north of Stone Road?
- What is the meaning and intent of the terms “aviation use” and “aviation reserve”? Are the locations of those designated areas appropriate?
- During the discussion FAA’s representative noted that there was an error in the City’s earlier presentation. The airport is obligated to consider a second runway (not a runway extension) when operations reach 60% of the Annual Service Volume. The length, width and load-bearing strength of the runway are driven by the critical aircraft, which is the largest aircraft that uses the airport for 500 or more operations annually. It is current critical aircraft that drive the need for the Master Plan recommendations.

TOUR OF AIRPORT AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Following the tour of Tacoma Narrows Airport and surrounding areas, including the Watland parcel, the following observations were made:

- The ground tour provided pilots with a somewhat different perspective of what they see from the air, particularly the implications for the Watland parcel and Pt. Fosdick residences. It helpful to see aircraft activity from the perspective of people on the ground. The air tour will help residents see these same things from the perspective of pilots.
- The proximity of the Watland parcel to both the urban growth area (across the street) and to the airport were surprising.
- The amount of area required and the size of stormwater facilities at the airport was surprising.
- The size of the airport (how large it is), and the amount of impervious surface was surprising.
- The topographical challenges to develop lands south of Stone Road for airport related uses was surprising.
- Rich Mueller, Airport Operations Manager’s, briefing showed his knowledge and love of the facility.
- The Airport is looking so much better than it used to.
- TNAAC needs to know more about the Watland proposal and its background. What is the timing of the decision? When will TNAAC review the issues related to the property?
- Is adding the Watland parcel to the Gig Harbor UGA a foregone conclusion?
- Is there a “magic line” separating Watland’s parcel from the Airport?
- One of the alternatives for TNAAC’s recommendation on the Watland parcel is “no action”.

The future air tour was discussed, with the following points:

TOUR OF AIRPORT AND SURROUNDING AREAS

- All should be done on the same day so that all participants get the same weather, pattern, etc.
- The tour should include the approach pattern and both IFR and VFR landings.
- Both a planned date and a rain date alternative are needed.

MEETING EVALUATION

+ (Liked)	D (Should Change)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of staff work has been excellent• The bus tour of the airport and surrounding lands was helpful• Presentations were good• FAA's continued presence is helpful, it provides needed information to TNAAC, and it gives FAA representatives insight into community perspectives.• Rich Mueller's involvement was helpful. Perhaps he could attend future meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure meeting notes are dated and if notes or any other materials have been edited that the new version is noted.

NEXT MEETING

The next Commission meeting will be held on February 12, 2004, at 7:30 p.m., at the Gig Harbor Civic Center.

- Add to the agenda: An agenda for the 2/26 public hearing should be developed in case there is more time available for the commission to deliberate than originally contemplated.