



WASILLA PUBLIC MEETING NO. 1

OCTOBER 18, 2006

MEETING NOTES

SUBJECT: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Public Meeting No. 1

DATE: October 18, 2006

LOCATION: Cottonwood Creek Elementary School, Wasilla

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Approximately 60 attendees, including staff (several meeting participants declined to sign in)

MEETING MATERIALS: PowerPoint Presentation and Project Graphics

MEETING AGENDA

- 6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Open House
- 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Presentation
- 8:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Open House
- 8:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Debrief/Final Questions and Thoughts

OPEN HOUSE

The meeting started with a half-hour open house where attendees talked informally to project staff and government officials about the project around several stations. The station topics covered:

- Inventory
- Airport Compatibility
- Airspace, Communications, Registration
- Public Airport Improvements/Airport Siting Study
- Survey/Comments

PRESENTATION

Tom Middendorf and John Jones of DOWL Engineers presented information about the purpose of the project and the information at the various stations.

COMMENT SUMMARY

The following comments and questions were asked during the presentation and the open house. The project staff's responses and comments are shown in *italics*.

Aviation Inventory

- Meeting attendees pointed out airstrips that the project team had not identified and areas that had incorrectly been identified as airstrips.
- Elmendorf Air Force Airclub (approximately 200 members):
 - Rentals: tricycle gear only, no taildraggers (6 Cessna 172s, Twin-engine Piper Seneca).
 - Use Goose Bay Airport alot for training.
 - Air Force rentals restricted to fields of 2,000 feet or longer.
- All airports with exception of Palmer are in military Training Area S-2. S-1 is other side of arm (Birchwood).
- Civil Air Patrol uses Birchwood, Merrill Field, and Elmendorf.
- Pilots are moving from Anchorage to the MSB to buy property and build airstrips; typically buy into existing aviation-oriented subdivisions.

Airport Compatibility

- MSB has no authority over private airstrips, and cannot tell private airstrip owners how to design or build their airstrips.
- Upper Wasilla Lake formerly used by two commercial operators (Country Lakes Flying Service and Bear Air). Commercial use of this lake should be grandfathered in.

Public Airport Improvements/Airport Siting

- Make public airports secure to prevent vandals and theft.
- Palmer Airport:
 - Underutilized due to security issues.
- Wasilla Airport:
 - Underutilized due to security issues.
 - Runway should be at least 5,000 feet long.
 - Best airport in the MSB to publish an ILS approach.
- Money should be spent on improving existing airports, not building new airports.
- There is a need for a fueling facility at one of the public floatplane facilities in the MSB; currently the only fuel is at Nancy Lake (private operation). Most pilots carry fuel on trucks (less convenient and safe). Fuel used to be available at the Big Lake Resort. Would be great if this could be reinstated. Resort is for sale.
- Goose Bay
 - If the Knik Arm bridge is built, then an airport is needed somewhere at or south of Goose Bay (Goose Bay Airport has lots of potential, and is favorably located with an approach over water instead of homes).
 - Expand and pave runway.

- Needs lease lot development. Development of homes off airport with hangars across the street on the airport (might make airport more competitive with private strips).
- Lower rates to attract lessees.
- Needs to clean up hazardous waste sites and make it useable.
- Establish flight school facilities and charter service.
- Need fueling station.
- Provide mobile home for airport manager to live on-site.
- Box hangars will probably sell better than T-hangars even though they are more expensive – would have enough room for bathrooms, an office, etc.
- People/pilots want more airport security; vandalism is a big problem.
- Would not want any additional restrictions at Goose Bay.
- Big Lake floatplane ramp (owned by MSB):
 - Floatplane ramp needs to be improved.
 - Big Lake Airport tenants who do maintenance and other regular users pay a \$100/year fee and insurance to the MSB for use of the ramp.
 - Money collected from aircraft tax should be used for maintenance (no current maintenance).
 - Was reported to be a recent attempt to close the ramp. The ramp is very important to floatplane operators who need aircraft maintenance and for tenants.
 - Mostly used during seasonal changeover from floats to wheels.
 - Needs fueling facility.
 - No transient tie downs for floatplanes.
 - Road to ramp is obstructed by trees. Clean out trees and brush (may be some park issues with tree removal).
 - Gravel ramp is in poor condition.
 - Property next to park is for sale; could be used for a proper floatplane base.
- Big Lake Airport
 - Expand and pave runway.
 - Taxiway needs resurfacing (very rough surface).
 - Need for an automated weather station.
 - New hangars being built at airport by out of state individuals who are storing their floatplanes (on floats) for the winter.
 - Consider selective fencing to reduce vandalism and non-aviation pedestrians and drivers from entering the airfield. Not all airport users agree with fencing, however.

- Willow Airport
 - North-south oriented runway at Willow compared to east-west at most other airports in region (used as an alternate when north-south winds do not allow landings elsewhere).
 - The airport has a nice long and wide runway.
 - Needs apron space, vehicle parking lot, and hangars.
 - Needs to be some type of non-precision instrument approach and an automated weather station.
 - Issues regarding the public floatplane access at Willow Lake need to be resolved (Willow Lake has no transient float parking).
- Talkeetna Airport
 - Need to relocate airport further away from town to allow town to grow. At a minimum, should preserve land outside of town for a future airport.
 - Occasional problems with transient traffic during the summer. Due to the high level of summer activity a seasonal tower (summer only) is needed.
 - Need better control of routes around Mt. McKinley.
 - Need float facility on airport (man-made pond).
 - * No commercial float ops in area because not welcome at Fish/Christiansen Lakes.
 - * Pond on airport could provide flood protection and a gravel source for other airport improvements (flood protection would be accomplished by placing the pond east of the existing airport and using the pond as a diversion channel when the river floods into town).
- Some discussion about the need to build a large Anchorage International-type airport over in the MSB, possibly near Pt. MacKenzie. *The 2002 Anchorage International Airport Master Plan concluded this was not needed during the 20-year planning period.*
- Pt. MacKenzie area is not good for a new airport or additional airstrips. It is the “entrance and exit” area of Merrill Field, military, and Anchorage International Airport.
- Would like to see more improvements at airports in the area east of Sutton and Sheep Mountain.
- Keep emergency strips open (Summit and Sheep Mountain).
- Need to develop public places for airplanes to land in passes.
- Wolf Lake is the only place with public floatplane slips. Wasilla could have public slips on Jacobsen Lake whenever a tower is established at Wasilla Airport.
- Need for public floatplane facilities with fuel in Palmer, Wasilla, and Talkeetna. When siting a public floatplane facility, consider the proximity to shopping areas. Rural pilots often fly into town to get supplies.

Airspace, Communications, Registration

- Matt described the steps of registering an airport with several airport owners.

- Why are military aircraft scheduling training missions in the valley, and do they monitor the CTAFs while in the area? *The airspace is open to all aircraft. The military's planes do monitor the appropriate CTAFs.*
- Mapped and published airspace corridors and altitudes would be helpful.
- It would help to separate transient aircraft flying passing through airspace in the MSB from those aircraft on a local flight that are based in the MSB.

Other

- Would like to see airports maps on the MSB website.
- There have not been that many accidents, so there should be no reason for the MSB to restrict development of more airports.
- Some people expressed mistrust of the MSB (what is the MSB's plan exactly; is it to raise taxes, restrict airport development, or close airports?)
- Road system airports are important because they serve as a base for flights out to rural airports
- Felt that the 2025 projection for based aircraft in the MSB is too high. Increasing fuel and insurance costs and aircraft prices may result in fewer based aircraft in the MSB.
- Needs to be some kind of clearing-house for aviation-related complaints.

The meeting ended at about 9:00 p.m. after a short recap of comments and some final questions.

Attachment(s): Flyer
Newspaper Announcements
Sign-in-Sheets
Handouts and Comment Form
PowerPoint Presentation