



PUBLIC MEETING NO. 2 PALMER LOCATION

MARCH 29, 2007

MEETING NOTES

SUBJECT: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Public Meeting No. 2
LOCATION: Colony Middle School
MEETING ATTENDANCE: Approximately 80 attendees, including staff
MEETING MATERIALS: PowerPoint Presentation and Project Graphics

MEETING AGENDA:

- 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m: Open House
- 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m: Presentation
- 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m: Questions and Comments

OPEN HOUSE:

The meeting started with a half-hour open house where attendees talked informally to project staff and Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) staff about the project around several stations. The station topics included:

- Airspace, Communications and Inventory
- Airport Compatibility and Templates
- Location Study
- Survey/Comments

PRESENTATION:

Tom Middendorf and John Jones of DOWL Engineers gave a PowerPoint presentation that included a project update, a summary of key issues and possible solutions identified to date, and an overview of the airport and floatplane facility siting study.

COMMENT SUMMARY:

The following pages contain a summary of the public's comments and questions. The summary includes comments and questions from both the open house portion of the meeting as well as the question and answer period that followed the PowerPoint presentation. *The project staff's responses and comments are shown in italics.*

Airspace, Communications and Inventory

- How does this plan address airports that have airspace conflicts with other airports? *The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airspace determination handles this issue.*
- *The FAA explained that oftentimes someone will put a lot of time and money into the construction of a new airstrip before they go to the FAA for an airspace review. It is better to go to the FAA first to determine if the potential site would receive a favorable airspace determination.*
- Are registering an airport and receiving an airspace determination two different things? *Yes. When an airstrip owner wants to register an airport with the FAA, the agency will do an airspace review of the airstrip, and the next step is to register an airport.*
- What happens if an existing airport receives an objectionable airspace determination? *This does happen sometimes. The FAA will try to work with the airstrip owner to develop a traffic pattern for the airstrip.*
- *The FAA has jurisdiction over the airspace above an airport; the agency does not get involved with land use.*
- The issue of improving communications needs immediate attention. It is something the FAA and MSB could improve now. Some ideas include running public service announcements on the radio and TV announcing the frequencies in use. This would help raise awareness and educate pilots in the area.
- More clarity is needed in regards to communications; one possibility is to list all the frequencies on the sectional.
- Many pilots only have one radio and can only monitor 122.8 or 122.9, but not both at the same time.

Airport Compatibility and Templates

- Would an airstrip template based on a smaller aircraft restrict larger aircraft from using the airstrip? *It could mean the airport owner would have to notify the MSB of the change, since the original aircraft on which the airstrip template was based had changed.*

- How would the template apply to airports with two runways perpendicular to each other? *Existing strips need to register with the FAA for airspace determination. For new airports, first airport to register would need to comply with template. Second airport might not be able to meet template.*
- The MSB needs to keep out of airstrip owners' business to the extent possible.
- Concerns that additional airport regulations will lead to increased MSB taxes of airport owners.
- MSB or DOT&PF should have an oversight role over land use compatibility at public airports.
- It could take months or years for the MSB to adopt any templates. What will happen in the meantime for new airports that want to register? *The FAA will continue to register airports. The registration process allows the FAA to mitigate or deconflict areas where airstrips are located extremely close together. The FAA expects a certain amount of cooperation between airport neighbors when trying to establish traffic patterns. The FAA hopes the MSB will require an FAA airspace review and FAA airport registration as part of the MSB airport registration process.*
- Does this study address landowner rights for those who live next to airports? *This study does not recommend zoning in the MSB.*
- Does the FAA require airports to create noise contours? *Not at private airports. When public airports accept federal funds, they must comply with grant assurances. One grant assurance says the public airport must seek compatible land use around the airport. This may include establishing noise contours, but contours are not required.*
- Does the FAA register lakes? *It is extremely hard to register a lake (difficult to establish takeoff and landing area dimensions as well as a traffic pattern if the area is not marked by buoys), but there are some that have been registered. People often try to register lakes so the FAA and MSB recognize it as a seaplane base, though the FAA does not register every lake request they receive.*
- Avigation easements should be required for longer runways serving busier airports.
- What is the definition of a new airport? Does it include an airport already under construction or already built but not registered with the FAA? Does it include major changes to an existing airport?
- How will the regulations affect an airport owned by multiple property owners?
- Is there any MSB land use protection of areas defined as advisory on the template? *No.*

Location Study

- The slides showing potential floatplane lakes in the southern half of the MSB do not show all the lakes in the southern half of the MSB. *Those sites may meet some of the siting criteria, but likely interfere with Anchorage International Airport and Elmendorf Air Force Base's airspace. This study is concentrating on sites north of Pt. McKenzie Road.*
- Where is the demand coming from that has resulted in the need for the floatplane study? *The MSB received a federal earmark to conduct the study. Also the Anchorage Area GA plan has called for a new floatplane facility to help relieve the shortage of floatplane slips at Lake Hood. Project staff have heard from many who suggest there is a need for facility for floatplane tie downs for residents who do not live on a lake, for commercial operations that cannot be located elsewhere, and for maintenance and fueling of floatplanes. Project staff have not identified specific individuals/businesses willing to relocate to a public floatplane base if it were built.*
- Traffic from the Talkeetna Airport could be an issue if a floatplane facility were located at Scotty Lake.
- Would it be possible to construct a floatplane facility at the Talkeetna Airport?
- How would construction of a new floatplane facility be funded? *Usually about 95% of the cost could be paid for with FAA funds, and the remaining five percent of the costs would be funded by the airport owner (sponsor). DOT&PF usually puts funding priority on airports off the road system where the airport is the primary access point, so it may be difficult for DOT&PF to become the airport owner and make the new airport a priority for funding.*
- Some of the proposed floatplane sites are within 20 miles of existing public airports. Does not this go against the NPIAS guideline of new airports should be built at least 20 miles away from existing public-use airports that receive FAA money? *The project team talked to the FAA about this, and it was determined that a new floatplane facility would not be in competition with public-use airports serving primarily wheeled aircraft.*
- The sensitive ecosystem and presence of waterfowl could make the Palmer Hay Flats area an unsuitable place to construct a floatplane facility.
- Consider a public floatplane base on Lake Lucille. There is MSB property on the east end and it is centrally located.
- Let private sector build new floatplane facilities.

Other Comments and Questions

- How will the recommendations that result from the study be funded? *At this time the project team does not have an answer, but the question has been noted.*
- Has the project team considered rebuilding the Lake Louise Airport? *DOT& PF is in the process of designing this project. Recent information suggests it may be funded soon.*

- It would be helpful to put the number of aircraft based at each airstrip on the inventory maps; this would help determine the concentration of aircraft in the MSB.
- Public notices for the first public meeting should have gone to all airplane owners in the MSB.
- The aviation community seems to be involved in this project. How can we get the general public more involved?
- The next public meeting should be in October; August and September are hunting season.

The meeting ended at about 9:00 p.m. and informal discussions continued between the meeting attendees and project staff.

Attachment(s): PowerPoint Presentation

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