

West Anchorage Planning Group Special Session #3

Airport Workshop Notes

Tuesday, January 27, 5:30-8:30pm

Federation of Community Councils, 1057 W. Fireweed Lane

WAPG Members Present:

John Johanson, TSAIA
Andy Hutzler, Lake Hood
Ed Fogels, Sand Lake CC
Tim Pine, Sand Lake CC
Mike Carlson, At Large Citizen
Peggy Auth, Spenard CC
Matt Burkholder, Spenard CC (for Jason)
Cathy Gleason, Turnagain CC
Breck Tostevin, Turnagain CC
PJ Cramer, Alaska Commodity Freight Forwarders

Staff Present:

Tyler Robinson, MOA Physical Planning Director
Thede Tobish, MOA Project Manager
Jon Issacs, URS Project Manager
Paul DePalatis, AICP URS Senior Planner
Kim Wetzel, URS Planner
Sheyna Wisdom, URS Noise Expert
Steve Powell, FAA Safety and Compliance
Gabriel Mahns, FAA
Bill Mehner, HLB Executive Director
Karlee Gaskill, HLB
Patty Sullivan, FAA Environmental Manager
Jack Jones, TSAIA Planning
John Parrott, TSAIA

Summary of Airport Realities . . .

- 1. The airport has absolute legal control over the property it owns. Giving away that property (even with use restrictions) increases the risk that incompatible uses might find a way to locate there.*
- 2. Airport land is a scarce resource that can never be replaced. Once it is out of airport control, it will never be returned. Therefore, the airport (at FAA insistence) will be VERY cautious about releasing it.*
- 3. Each piece of airport property has a different value to TSAIA and FAA based on its location and aviation function. Some are more necessary than others. For example:*
 - Property at the end of runways, especially within a Runway Protection Zone, is critical to aviation safety.*
 - Property in South Airpark is divided from the terminal by the E-W runway and therefore is less accessible to General Aviation (GA).*
 - Property south of Raspberry Road is physically separated from the runway and cannot be directly used by aircraft.*

4. *The airport must receive equal or greater benefit for any land disposal (trade/sale) or encumbrance (buffer/easement) it places on property it owns, particularly those that are designated for aviation purposes.*
5. *The airport has a Federal obligation to discourage non-compatible uses from locating around the airport . . . most importantly in the 65DNL noise contour and in areas within the flight path that projects outward from the runways.*
6. *The airport values predictability as much as the community does but is required to accommodate an industry that is inherently competitive and unpredictable. (i.e. airlines respond to short term market demand and rarely plan more than a year in advance)*
7. *The airport is not required to develop every square inch of property up to its fence line and there is some flexibility to accommodate buffers and other mitigation techniques. However, the airport is hesitant to prematurely concede control of its land since this COULD (over the 50-100 year life of the airport) inhibit the ability to accommodate aviation projects. Any permanent commitment of airport land requires FAA approval.*
8. *Alongside their mandate to accommodate aviation needs, FAA also encourages airports to seek consistency with local land use plans to the extent possible. Therefore, if the District Plan presents realistic, workable solutions to airport issues, they will be seriously considered in airport planning efforts.*

Topical Discussion . . .

General FAA Observations

In reality, most airports are not profitable and have a hard time paying their bills.

TSAIA is not an isolated facility but is part of a national and international airport network.

Once an airport exists, because of the high level of investment, it rarely relocates and can be expected to operate in a community for 50-100 yrs.

As a rule, FAA wants to maximize air traffic to its investment.

Difficulties with Long Term Airport Planning

The community would like the airport to commit to a long term development plan so they know what to expect on airport land. The airport has difficulty in accommodating this because aviation demand is driven by the airlines and land uses are not known until a specific airport lease proposal is made. For example:

- TSAIA didn't know United Airlines was coming to ANC until they saw it in the press release. United did not know either until they saw the demand.

- FAA indicated that for airlines, as surprising as it seems, what's happening a year in advance is a "long-term" plan.
- TSAIA stated that two years ago (2008), 23 businesses wanted to bid on lots at South Airpark. Today (2010) there are none.

While the airport can't make binding commitments about detailed development plans, they do have a general idea about what is likely to occur given the physical location of vacant lands in relation to existing facilities.

For example, due to location, the South Air Park is likely to attract corporate jets, but it would not function well as a cargo hub or GA area because of operational issues and distance from the terminal. GA aircraft coming from South Air Park would experience delays waiting for inbound landing traffic on the east/west runway when taxiing to their primary departure runway 32. All aircraft departing any runway want the quickest, least resistant taxi route.

Airport Land Disposals

The airport has a federal obligation to keep incompatible uses away from airport property. Therefore, it must control the uses on any properties it disposes of. For example, recreation uses might generally be compatible (e.g. trails or a soccer field) but when you start adding facilities that would concentrate people there (bleachers, pavilion, etc.), recreation uses can become incompatible.

FAA stated that the Airport must get "like-return" for its land. Before it can be sold or traded the airport must prove that they are getting fair market value.

Obtaining any government property is time consuming, even between agencies. For example, in order for the airport to obtain ownership of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) parcels north and south of Raspberry, FCC is required to prepare paperwork demonstrating they don't need the property. It is then transferred to the BLM (the Federal Land agency), who does their paperwork to demonstrate that no other federal agency needs the land. The State is next in line. If no state agency can use the property, then the local municipality can ask for it. This process takes many years. The airport has applied for the property, the MOA has not.

Effects of Federal Funds and Land Grants

The majority of FAA monies are earmarked for airfield improvements in the range of \$40 million/year in discretionary and entitlement monies. The airport is required to contribute matching revenues. These are strictly for capital projects and don't include Operations and Maintenance (O&M).

In addition to taking Federal money, the fact that the airport received Federal land also makes it subject to their grant assurances. The assurances are attached to the

entire airport property and, in a practical sense, last forever. Each grant of funds extends the assurances for 20 years.

Regarding land transferred from MOA to the airport, if the airport were to theoretically stop accepting federal funds, 20 years down the road the non-federal land would no longer be subject to FAA assurances.

State Entitlement Lands

MOA did not receive all of the lands it requested as part of the entitlement request settlements. The determination to conclude the State Selection process and transfer parcel ownership is in the hands of the Federal and State government, not MOA or the airport staff. There is a hierarchy of right which moves from federal to state to local government. Being at the end of the line, as long as the federal or state government has use for a particular property, all the MOA can say is "we want these lands if/when they're available".

For example, entitlement parcel #26 (containing the snow dump site at the east end of the E-W runway) is in a Runway Protection Zone. Therefore, to protect aviation safety interests, the FAA (federal agency) will never be able to justify transferring ownership of that parcel, even though the State/MOA Selection Agreement might have identified it for transfer.

The airport would support a recommendation to clarify and potentially resolve the State Selection parcels on airport land.

Buffers

The 2002 Airport Land Use Plan Map includes a "buffer" designation. The term would normally be defined on the map or elsewhere within the document. FAA considers it to be in effect only until the next Master Plan update and assumes that, eventually, all airport property could be developed. Because terms like "buffer" can be misinterpreted as permanent designations, the FAA and airport are very cautious about using these terms to avoid giving people the wrong impression. FAA would characterize the buffer as an "interim use", a short term use of airport land until it is needed for permanent aviation facilities. Typically interim uses are recognized in 1-5 year increments.

FAA would also consider the buffer area to be reserved for "aeronautical" purposes because there is a defined public process (with specific findings) to convert land from "aeronautical" to "non-aeronautical" use. The airport requests this change and FAA must approve it. FAA is typically hesitant to approve the use change, requiring strong justification, because it reduces the supply of aviation land and is very difficult to undo. Kulis is an example of airport land that is being considered for non-aeronautical use. Turnagain Bog has not been through this process.

FAA indicates that there could be some room to consider a buffer somewhat permanent as an “aviation” use since it could contribute to neighborhood and aviation compatibility. However, it depends on the details and each case must be reviewed independently. There are no guarantees.

TSAIA knows of some creative ways to designate lands as “open” that are fairly permanent (55 years at a time) and that might meet everybody's needs. The community and the airport do not want to rehash things every 5 years.

The Planning Group suggested that the District Plan identify sensitive areas and recommended buffer locations around the airport boundary. Buffering along a road (e.g. Raspberry) for visual reasons is distinct from larger buffers on/around airport property for a wider range of reasons. Therefore, the identification of sensitive areas would provide the airport with a reliable community consensus to plan for a variety of solutions. Ideally, the MOA Comprehensive Plan, Airport Master Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan, District Plan, etc. should all be consistent.

Accommodating Community Concerns

On the airport side, FAA encourages airports to strive for consistency with local land use planning documents which includes consideration of local interests and TSAIA wants to be a good neighbor within the bounds of its FAA grant assurances.

Although the FAA does not approve the Airport Master Plan, it sees the mandatory public process as a primary means to ensure that local community issues are identified and considered. However, the Airport Master plan shouldn't be seen as a permanent “agreement” since it is, by nature, evolving with regular, periodic changes to accommodate aviation needs.

The airport is willing to apply graduated use restrictions on lease lots near residential areas at the airport boundary. The difficulty is in knowing what restrictions are appropriate or how best to apply them until a specific development proposal is made. They don't want to prematurely exclude uses that might be appropriate by imposing requirements that are too rigid.

The airport also has mechanisms to require reasonable setbacks so leaseholders don't build right to the airport boundary.

The MOA would like to consider zoning type standards on airport property near the boundary to address setbacks, etc.

Airport Noise

FAA indicates that the government does not place the burden of addressing noise solely on the local community. Although airport traffic may continue to increase, government regulations require improvements in technology to reduce aircraft

noise. For example, Congress has phased out older, noisier (Stage 2) aircraft and is requiring development of the next generation of even quieter (Stage 4) aircraft.

FAA clarified that the Part 150 Study, in addition to focusing FAA funds for sound insulation, is also intended to help guide offsite land use decisions to help avoid non-compatible land uses from occurring.

Sound insulation will help interior noise, but GA noise is loudest when you're outside in the yard. Unfortunately, there is no consistently effective method to reduce exterior noise levels, especially from overhead aircraft.

There are many different kinds of airport noise based on where you live geographically (e.g. vehicle backup alarms).

Airport Notifications

There was concern voiced that airport notifications would reduce property values and that requiring sound insulation would require homeowners or builders to bear higher building costs. This is not under the airport's control but would be a decision the MOA would make weighing these effects against considerations of fair disclosure to buyers and lifestyle enhancements for current and future residents.

Other impacts on the Community

Though noise was discussed this evening, there are many other land use impacts that merit consideration, related to both aeronautical and non-aeronautical uses (e.g. traffic)

Map/Parcel Discussion

New parcels for discussion (see PDF below):

- #20 - What is the history behind the wedge of airport property between Parcels 2 and 16?
- #21 - Possibly HLB property in the mudflats, west of Parcels 5 & 17.
- #22 - Airport property, open space north of north airpark and south of Parcel 8.

Areas of potential concern:

- Residential areas adjacent to Kulis and DeLong Lake
- Residential areas south of Parcel 19
- The Raspberry Road corridor into Kincaid Park

- Residential areas along the northeast border of the airport

Parcel 1/16 – TSAIA has requested that both parcels be transferred from FCC to the State. FAA noted that these parcels would align with a future second north-south runway making them valuable for the airport to control for compatibility purposes. TSAIA thinks Parcel 16 fits into their footprint nicely. They don't have long term thoughts on what they would do with Parcel 1. The MOA has not made any formal request for either parcel.

Recommendation:

- Consider MOA acquisition of Parcel 1 for addition to the Kincaid Park.
- Consider ways to protect a visual buffer north of Raspberry via parcelization or non-aeronautical designation.

Parcel 1, 18, 19 are similar in that they are separated from the airport by Raspberry Road. Consequently, it is not practical for use by aircraft. TSAIA would be willing to pursue designating these lands non-aeronautical, and instead locate some sort of compatible non-aircraft uses there (e.g. FAA offices or a post office).

Recommendation:

- Designate these parcels non-aeronautical.

Parcels 2, 3, 7, 8, and 12 fall under the City Land Selection from 1986 – HLB made application to these parcels under the Municipal Entitlement Act. MOA never got them. The 1986 Settlement contained conditions which have not been resolved. A reason for the delay is that a State law needs to be resolved within Federal land.

Parcel 2 – WAPG wants to keep fishing at Little Campbell Lake- even if it's just a portion of the lake. Preservation of a natural buffer between airport operations and residential is important. This area still feels like wilderness even though it's next to the airport.

Parcel 12 – FAA will not allow TSAIA to give up the runway protection zone. It is not realistic to put this on the table.

A strategy for long-term wetlands preservation may be through the USACE. USACE does accept a conservation easement from HLB. The federal government finds conservation easements to be legally binding in the case of wetlands mitigation. HLB warned, "be careful what you ask for" because conservation easements limit access (i.e. the land could not be used as a park).

Parcel 13 – MOA wants to site a snow dump here. A small part of this parcel contains wetlands.

