

State Airport System Plan Update

Public Meeting

Tuesday, October 9th, 2018

Bennington Fire Department

Introductions – Dan Delabruere, Michele Boomhower (economic development) - VTrans

Power Point Presentation – Costa Pappis (VTrans)

Questions/Comments

- What Category of Airport is Bennington? Category 3
- Why is Bennington being listed as a Category 3 Airport, the runway is only 3,700' in length? Costa explained the proposed categorization system and the minimum and recommended service and facilities requirements are what the airports should strive for over the next twenty years, not what's available now.
- We just got done rebuilding the runway and taxiway to 3,700' why didn't we just build it to 4,000' so that it would meet the next category up that you are recommending for the categorization of this airport? Dan explained that the runway extension is meeting the needs of current aircraft that are landing on the length of runway that is available – based on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards and criteria. This is how the FAA determines runway lengths eligible for federal funding.
- Larger aircraft can't land on the extended runway – this is a chicken and an egg matter which the FAA does not recognize in terms of needs at airports. Dan explained that the FAA would not have funded an extension of the Bennington runway to 4,000', and the State could not afford to extend an additional 300' of due to the expense of fill and the available space for the extension.
- Where was this meeting advertised in Bennington? Costa explained that a notice was published in the Bennington Banner, notice was sent to the Regional Planning Commission, and meeting dates were forwarded to members of the Aviation Advisory Council. The Bennington Banner also ran a story on October 8th.
- There was no information given at the airport. Costa noted that moving forward, FBO and state airport managers would be provided with posters about the meetings.
- Why wasn't the public meeting held at the airport? Costa explained that meeting locations were selected for their proximity to towns' population bases, and for security purposes.
- Couldn't we get a list of all pilots in the state and let them know about the plan update process?
- There are stakeholders at the airport who pay rent to the State of Vermont – could these folks be notified? Costa noted that we will continue to compile email contacts to distribute information. We will also be meeting with fixed-based operators (FBO) and state airport managers to get input from airport businesses.
- Civil Air Patrol – Aerospace Education Coordinator – what support can the State lend to that effort to prepare the next generation of pilots, mechanics, etc.? This theme needs to be identified as a need in the Airport Plan, along with strategies to support it. Dan noted that he had a meeting with the education coordinator at the FAA office in Burlington, MA and there are

no programs which currently exist in New England. He explained that VTrans will try to direct Chris Raymond's resources in a manner to better support outreach efforts to youth, and discussed prior efforts that the Agency has undertaken to support youth efforts, such as fly in camps for kids, etc.

- Can the State provide support for local/regional folks that are trying to do programming outside of Chris Raymond's activities as Chris appears to be stretched too far?
- Could we reach out to the Vocational Education Centers in areas where there are vocational centers near State airports where programs could be hosted?
- Could the State partner with the Aviation Industry to provide support for educational programs? Dan noted that we will consider these requests.
- There are two groups at the airport that already fly kids – the Civil Air Patrol and the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) Young Eagles Program.
- Excited to see the H. 620 electrification . Electric aircraft technology could be showcased at the airport.
- As it relates to H. 620, there are currently no charging stations at the Bennington Airport – is there federal funding available? Michele discussed the VW funding, the Public-Private Partnership (P3) efforts of VTrans and our interest in collaborating to develop charging at airports.
- Are you familiar with Delaware State University? – this airport has expanded extensively and they are growing a student population of aviators – what if we were able to work a partnership with such an institution? potentially more FAA resources could be attracted to Vermont. Dan discussed the Vermont Tech Program which is administered out of the Williston campus in coordination with the Burlington International Airport.
- Foreign carriers will often locate training sites at smaller regional airports – perhaps these could be opportunities for the State in this manner? How could the State attract educational programming?
- Support was expressed to develop the Bennington Airport Development Corporation (BDAC) by those interested in aviation matters.
- An instrument approach is needed for the Bennington Airport.
- There are trees off the west side approach which need to be cut – off the approach of 1-3. Dan explained the issue of the displaced threshold and how we are addressing it.
- There used to be funding for airport staffing on weekends, which created sustainable economic activity. Dan explained that there will be a Request for Proposals for an FBO coming out shortly for the Bennington Airport.
- FBOs typically provide the types of services which cover weekends, fueling, guest automobiles. There are no taxi services to get folks into town.
- Question on based aircraft – what is the “other” category? Costa explained that these can be experimental aircraft, gliders or any other aircraft that don't fall within existing categories.
- Has the State thought of ways to try and attract more aircraft basing? Michele noted the runway extension, the re-establishment of the instrument approach, the FBO placement, and hangars, should support this goal.
- The tarmac needs to be upgraded, it seems like an unfinished project. Dan explained that the apron is on the list for improvement, but that currently this is not a priority for the FAA.

- How do we incorporate a tree management plan? Dan explained that there has not been a plan to cut trees along approaches, some going back nearly 20 years. Moving forward we are going to be evaluating all of our approaches every year, and prioritize where brush-hogging, tree cutting, and vegetation management will be addressed for all state airports.
- There is a young Civil Air Patrol group which has formed. There is now an aircraft which has been made available to the CAP on a ½ month basis. Could the Civil Air Patrol have a spot in the VanWermer Hanger so that the plane could be positioned in Bennington on an ongoing basis?
- The second taxiway to the west end of the ramp has been eliminated, why? Dan indicated that the FAA required the elimination of that ramp due to new geometry requirements.
- Is there a new procedure for pilots who would like to back taxi or do a 180 degree turn and return? Two points of access versus three, does not seem to be a big issue. Dan will raise this issue with the FAA.
- Will the Agency of Commerce be involved in these meetings? The interest of VTrans in stimulating business development has waxed and waned, the involvement of ACCD is likely needed. What is the potential for tax breaks, incentives which ACCD can provide? Michele noted the interest and involvement of the Secretary of Commerce, who is a pilot, in this effort, and he had planned to participate and will be interested in the feedback from this evening.
- There are some minor improvements needed:
 - The fence – could we call someone at the District 1 garage to address this?
 - The south side of the terminal building is deteriorating – the concrete blocks need attention – it looks bad.
 - Potential of moving the entrance gate further to the north to make it more friendly for public visitors who want to view aircraft operations – how can it be made more inviting?
- Is there a history of the State selling airports to the private sector – could this happen in the future? Dan talked about the history of the State acquiring airports when communities wanted to give them up.
- What are the projected funding trends going forward – will we be asking for more money? Costa addressed the federal funding projections based on the recently enacted FAA Authorization Bill – we are basically funded just above current levels with the supplemental funding which may become available periodically. Dan discussed the fluctuating nature of the State funded aviation budget based on the award of federal discretionary funding.
- Is the reason for the FAA geometry focus based on safety? Dan indicated that this is a part of it. The focus a few years ago was the safety areas, not geometry.