

COLVILLE AIRPORT RELOCATION STUDY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document is updated as new information is gathered. Please check the date above to make sure you are looking at a current version. Contact Lori Isenberg with questions and comments: loriisenberg@nwdynamics.net Responses provided by consultant team with input from city staff. Information from other sources is identified.

New questions / answers as of Dec. 5, 2009: *We received a few other questions that we are still working on; we will update this document with those as soon as possible.*

- A. *If an airport is built in a new location, what happens to the current airport?***
- The disposition of the existing airport would be determined by the Colville City Council,.
- B. *Will the current airport property revert back to the original property owner if the airport is relocated?***
- This answer would require a title report and a legal opinion on the findings, which has not yet been performed.
- C. *On the FAQ sheet, reference question 17 under "Economic Impacts." The answer about how the economy will be affected long term was a very general quote from a WSDOT LATS. Could you be more specific as it relates to this area? Where and who will do an OFFICIAL Financial Feasibility Study? I do not consider what the president of the Chamber of Commerce is doing to be an official study.***
- The city applied for a USDA grant earlier in 2009 to help fund an economic development study for a new airport, but this grant was not awarded. If the city secures funding for such a study, it would be probably be performed by a consultant who has special expertise in this area.
- D. *Reference the Aladdin site, I have heard what the engineers plan to do to "protect" the city water and surrounding wells. One can drain runoff one way and build walls, etc., to minimize the risk. Why take that risk with the city's main water source and affect the surrounding landowners and their wells? As stated by the mayor, "there are no guarantees." It just takes once. How is the city prepared to handle the worst case scenario? Again, I ask, "Why take that risk?"***
- One of the key purposes of the FAA NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) study is to address the issues you mentioned – for every site being seriously considered. These issues were also mentioned by the committee as potential criteria for the site selection process.

- E. *We have an existing high school at the south end of the proposed site on Aladdin. With the supposed increased air traffic, would that not increase the risk to the students, faculty and staff? In the event of a real emergency, how do you notify and evacuate the school in time? Is there a plan in place? What about the learning distractions from the noise and what about increased emissions?***
- These issues also fall under the FAA NEPA study process. The “environment” in NEPA includes the human environment and how any action might affect the community. These issues were also mentioned by the committee as potential criteria for the site selection process.
- F. *Should the airport (at the Aladdin site) be an option, situated between two mountain ranges, with turbulent air currents?***
- Flight operations safety will be a key factor in the FAA NEPA process. All potential sites will be evaluated with respect to aviation, flight paths, and safety.
- G. *Should the Department of Health be added to agencies to contact in this study process?***
- Yes, we will invite them.
- H. *Does the City Council vote to proceed with eminent domain?***
- Refer to answer #10.
- I. *What is the process to acquire land?***
- Refer to answer #10.
- J. *Will FAA go forward if the property hasn't been acquired?***
- FAA is a regulatory and financing agency for airports. A local agency like the city or some other entity would actually be the sponsor of a new airport in the Colville area. At the appropriate step between the site selection and the construction of a new airport, the property acquisition must be completed.
- K. *Which departments in the city generate enough revenue to fund themselves; maybe water and sewer?***
- This information will be requested from the city.

COMMITTEE PURPOSE

- 1. *What is the expectation of the committee from the city council?***

The Mayor and City Council expect the consultant to work with the committee to accomplish the Purpose and Objectives of the contract as outlined in the scope of work (shown here):

Purpose: To provide information on the airport study, and to gather issues and concerns from the public, which will be addressed during the environmental assessment study process.

Objectives

1. Increase public awareness about the project purpose and study process.
2. Minimize misperceptions about what the study is and what it is not.
3. Encourage participation in the study process by interested stakeholders.
4. Document issues and concerns raised by the public.

For example, the following were identified by the committee as things that are important to the community and should be considered during the formal NEPA process:

- quality of life / families
- proximity of an airport to future residential areas
- opportunity for job creation / economic development
- public safety
- environment / recreation
- private property rights
- access to healthcare
- community spirit (character of the community)
- education

Other things the committee will do:

- Gather information from the city, county, community groups, and agencies regarding their perception of the need to relocate the airport.
- Review a list of potential sites from the city and add to it as needed.
 - The committee will NOT study the specific sites or make any recommendation either for or against any specific site. All potential sites must be considered during the NEPA process)
- Develop preliminary criteria to be used in the site selection process.
- Develop suggestions on ways to communicate with the public during the NEPA process.

2. *Are we supposed to develop a broad vision for the community with specific plans for the airport?*

Not necessarily. The first priority is to accomplish the original scope of work. The idea to broaden the scope to include visioning was not approved by the city council. The committee is supposed to assist the consultant to “provide information on the airport study, and to gather issues and concerns

from the public, which will be addressed during the environmental assessment study process”. The discussion about issues and concerns will most likely include things that are typically talked about during a visioning process, such as what is important to community members and how they envision the community to be in the future. This is often referred to as a vision, but we are not developing a vision for the city.

3. *Are we ultimately expected to make a recommendation to the mayor? The city council? Are we looking for a majority vote? Consensus?*

No. The committee is only expected to assist the consultant in gathering information for the NEPA study process as mentioned in prior answers. The committee is not expected to make any formal recommendations. The committee may choose to include a record of their level of agreement on certain items in their meeting summaries and reports.

GENERAL

4. *If an airport is built in a new location, what happens to the current airport?*

The disposition of the existing airport would be determined by the Colville City Council, should the airport be relocated.

5. *Will a new airport be a City Airport or a Regional Airport?*

The terms "City" and "Regional" are WSDOT-Aviation Division terms used in accordance with State and Federal definitions based on the length of the runway, service area and other factors. The plans being discussed would meet the definition of a regional airport.

6. *What is the perceived operational capability of a new airport: medical?*

The alternate site feasibility study published in April, 2009 anticipated a runway of 5,000 feet long, with a full parallel taxiway, GPS-based instrument approach, and standard lighting. The Airport Reference Code standard would be B-II, capable of service for business class aircraft.

PROCESS

7. *What is the timeframe for our planning (20 years? 40 years?)*

Transportation planning is typically projected for a 20 year horizon. However, land acquisition should consider a significantly longer vision.

8. *Why isn't the county involved?*

Representatives of Stevens County were invited to the airport site feasibility planning meetings held in late 2008 and early 2009.

9. *What regulations need to be complied with during this process?*

There are many laws and regulations which govern the airport relocation process. Some of these are:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; State of Washington Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) planning, design and funding guidelines
- WSDOT-Aviation Division planning, design and funding guidelines
- Washington Growth Management
- Federal and State Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act

10. *If a site is selected that requires the purchase of private property, what is the process to purchase that property?*

State and Federal laws and regulations govern the procedure for Cities to acquire property. These include:

State of Washington:

- RCW 8.12
- RCW 8.26
- U.S. Federal Regulations:
- Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (PL 91-646, as amended)
- The RCW's were written to protect the private property owner from government taking of their land without making every reasonable effort to acquire the property by negotiation. The system works because over 95% of the time a negotiated settlement is arrived at.

11. *If needed, when and how does eminent domain come into play?*

The land acquisition process is governed by state and federal laws and regulations as referenced above. These laws define when and how "eminent domain" is employed.

12. *How will the decision to either leave the airport as is or build a new one affect the overall community related to: Strong families; Jobs and employment; Community Spirit; Economic Development; Education; Health Care; Infrastructure; Neighborhoods / Housing; Public Safety; Recreation*

Answering this question is one of the key purposes of this committee and the following FAA NEPA study process.

FUNDING

13. *Where will the funds come from for planning, construction, and maintenance?*

Ideally, funds necessary to finance the planning: environmental process, including site review and selection, design of an airport on a site if one is chosen and if the city decides to move forward as well as construction of the airport would potentially be paid for at a rate of 97.5 percent. Ninety-five

percent could be from the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. Two and one have percent could be from Washington State Aviation's grant program. In that case, the remaining two and one half percent would be from the city.

The current airport is not obligated to the federal government, meaning that federal funds have not been used to purchase or improve it. However, the federal government has funded planning and environmental work related to a new airport and the state has funded airport improvements. Portions of funds derived from the existing airport may – I say may - be claimed by either or both entities. This is an area that needs to be determined.

Maintenance of the airport would be the responsibility of the airport sponsor.

Once constructed, the sponsor would be able to tap what are called "non-primary entitlement funds" from the FAA if that program is still active at that time. Those funds are normally \$150,000

per year and are intended for airport capital improvements.

PUBLIC SAFETY

14. How does the current airport affect public safety?

The current airport's runway location and orientation facilitate flights over the center of population. This is not ideal. The airport's rather short runway impacts safety to some degree.

15. How might a new airport affect public safety?

If properly sited, it would limit flights over populated areas. It would be critical however to begin work on comprehensive planning, zoning and development regulations in the airport's environs to ensure future compatible land use. Otherwise major problems could occur as the city and county grow.

16. What do we know from the FAA wind study?

Nothing at this time.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

17. How will the economy of the community be affected long term: 1) by a new airport? 2) If nothing is done with the current airport?

The WSDOT Aviation Division Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) dated July, 2009 emphasizes that airports contribute significantly to Washington's economy. This 2009 WSDOT report notes the importance of local and regional airports on the economy of rural areas of Washington as well:

"Airports play an important role in rural economic development as well, providing a wide range of support for local businesses including agriculture and forest products businesses. Access to an airport is an important factor in a rural community's efforts to attract businesses. A 2002 study conducted by Washington State University, concludes,

"The individual benefits of rural airports range from improving the quality of health care, to supporting local businesses, providing critical emergency and disaster response, strengthening community, providing opportunities for recreation, military training, economic development, and much more. Airports are in several cases a symbol of hope for rural communities fighting for their economic life"

18. Is the development of an industrial park being planned near a new airport?

One of the key goals of a possible new airport for the Colville area is economic development. The availability of land area, infrastructure, and land transportation for potential industrial/commercial economic opportunities will be important siting criteria for a new airport.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (WATER, AIR, NOISE)

19. What are the environmental impacts of the current airport now, and in the future? What will be the environmental impacts of a new airport?

A detailed Airport Siting Study must include an Environmental Assessment (EA) process following state and federal guidelines. This EA process would evaluate potential new sites, as well as the existing site (the no action alternative). Environmental issues, which must be addressed in this analysis include, but are not limited to:

- Noise
- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Solid Waste
- Flood plains
- Wetlands
- Endangered or Threatened Species of Plants and Animals
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Land Use

20. What sites have been reviewed in the past?

In September **1987** CH2MHill and the Foresite Group published an airport master plan report for the existing airport site and a site selection study related to potential airport sites. The site selection study involved eight sites in addition to the existing site. They were:

- East Airport
- Rocky Lake
- Orin
- Arden Hills
- Corbett Creek
- Vaagen Valley
- Greenwood
- Chopot

East Airport Findings

- Terrain inconsistent with instrument flight operations (at that time)
- Visual flight operations would be impacted by terrain
- Expansion beyond 4,400 feet of runway length would not be possible
- Approach from west to east would overfly schools
- Traffic pattern would overfly the hospital
- Conclusion: "Compared to other alternatives, this alternative presents no significant advantages and, therefore, has been eliminated."

Rocky Lake Findings

- This site was reviewed in a 1976 master plan. Terrain is not considered suitable for an airport.

Orin Findings

- Numerous owners in the area expressed unwillingness to give up their property.
- It was stated that the soil, wildlife and flooding impact would be similar to the Vaagen site.

- The primary comment was that this site did not offer any advantages over the Vaagen site.
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Arden Hills Findings

- A 4,400-foot runway could be developed. Longer lengths would be difficult.
- Being out of the valley there is less occurrence of fog
- Travel distance to Colville is extensive
- Residential development north of the site is considered a negative issue
- FAA compared instrument and night visual operations to the Vaagen site and found this site to be inferior.

Corbett Creek Findings

- Determined to be a “wet” area of the valley – prone to flooding
- Landowners expressed opposition to development
- Access – presumably vehicular – would be more difficult than at the Vaagen site
- Instrument flight operations considered poor

Vaagen Valley Findings

- Considered “best in the valley”
- It was noted that an option existed for trading rather than purchasing parts of the property.
- Location was considered good due to proximity to the city, access and utilities
- It was noted to be in a floodplain and to have extensive wildlife
- Possible wetlands as defined by the U. S. Corps of Engineers
- Generally willing owners but owners both north and south objected.

Greenwood Findings

- Acceptable airspace and acceptable size
- Found to be “socially unacceptable” due to neighbor objections and the need to overfly schools.

Chopot Findings

- Eliminated “easily”
- It was determined that this site was more likely to have an instrument approach than the Vaagen site.
- The plan determined (incorrectly) that “a facility meeting even the minimum FAA standards could not be developed.”
- The orientation and location of a runway in this study was close to but not the same as the orientation and location of that shown in our recent feasibility study.

Vaagen Valley

In a detailed analysis, in addition to the existing airport site, the Vaagen Valley site and the Arden Hills site were chosen for further review. A site evaluation matrix was established.

Following were primary factors:

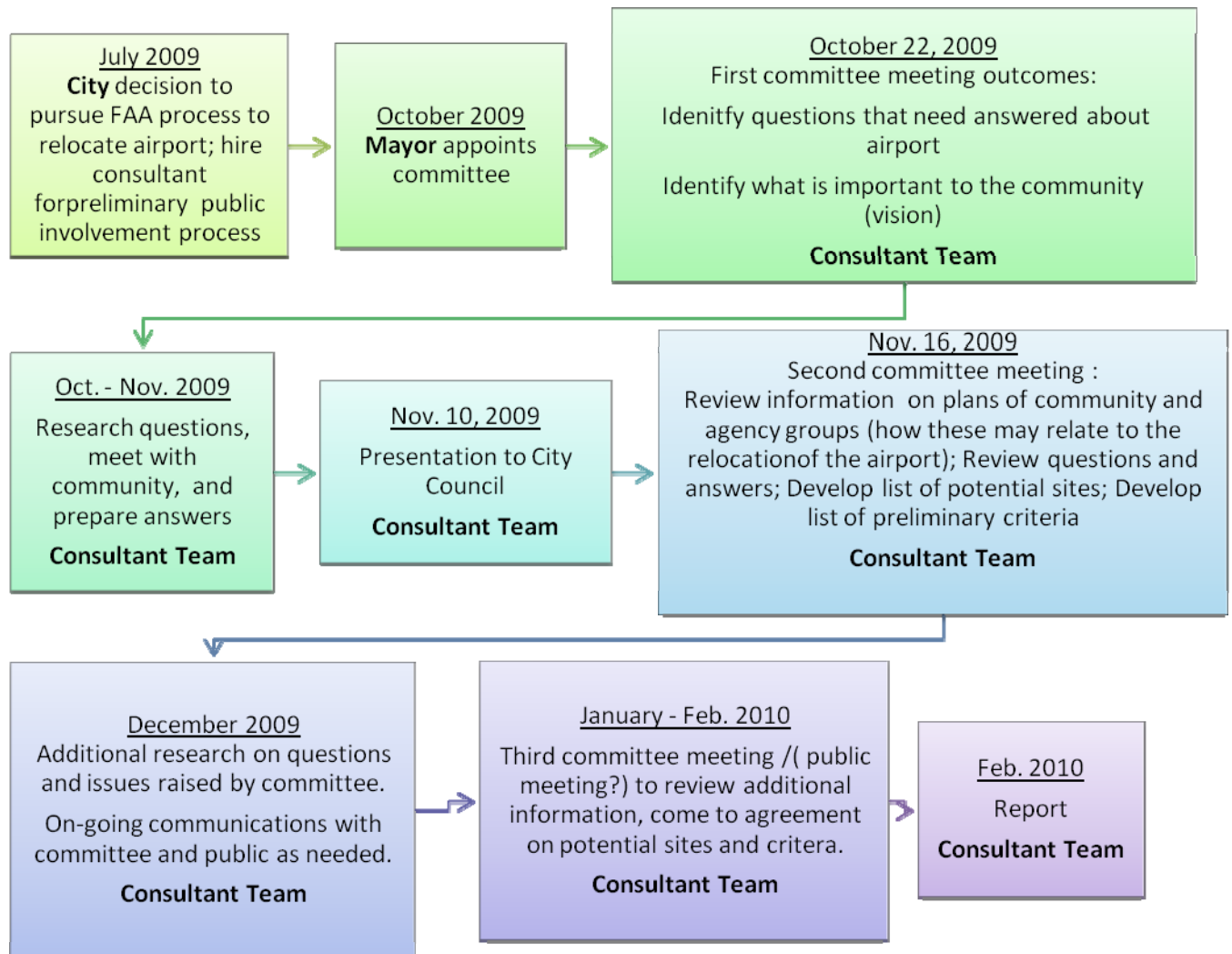
- Environmental
- Land Use Compatibility

- Obstructions
- Climate
- Airspace
- Accessibility
- Future Expansion Potential
- Land Ownership
- Land and Development Costs
- Management Potential

The Vaagen Valley site was chosen

21. What is the process and timeline?

The flow chart below shows the activity related to this committee and the preliminary plan forward; this may be revised by the mayor and council. The second flow chart outlines the typical FAA NEPA study process.



22. ***Hasn't the need for an airport in the Colville area already been determined by FAA, the Washington Department of Transportation Aviation Division, the City and others?***

It appears there is quite a bit of support for a new airport. Earlier this year letters were written to Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers expressing need for a new airport and requesting funding of the study effort. Key comments in those letters are noted below (duplicate comments were removed to reduce length); copies of the letters are available upon request.

State Senators Bob Morton, Joel Kretz and Shelly Short March 18, 2009

- Support of the development of a new regional airport that will serve Northeastern Washington.
- Recognize the incredible economic benefits that a new business and commuter small jet airport could bring the cities and counties within northeastern Washington.
- Preliminary plan includes business park development that will support light industries and other uses that will produce long-term economic dividends and employment opportunities that will prove the initial investment a wise investment.
- The region's residents are excited about increasing Northeastern Washington's accessibility to people throughout Washington State.
- We cannot emphasize enough the opportunities this project would bring in increased business, light industry, tourism and other contemporary airborne services. This is the right project at the right time.

Rodney D. Smoldon, Deputy Forest Supervisor Colville National Forest March 20, 2009

- The Colville National Forest supports the proposal to develop a new airport that will improve Fire Aviation Operations from efficiency, safety and cut costs. These improvements will be realized in both fixed-wing and rotor-wing aircraft operations. Recent review by the Pacific Northwest Regional Office of the US Forest Service Aviation Group identified several safety concerns that have resulted in reduced capacity concerning Helicopter Operations associated with fire suppression aviation resources at the current airport. This limitation was due to the minimal space for air operations that result in reduce safety margins. The issues center around inability to adequately de-conflict airspace with private aircraft and fire suppression aircraft.
- Additionally, the largest helicopters that are called into service for fire suppression operations are not able to safely operate out of the current airport.
- Fixed-wing operations are restricted at the current airport due to minimal runway length. Aircraft that could be utilized if there were a longer runway would be water-scooping aircraft, and both single retardant, and large retardant aircraft. Some administrative flights are limited due to the same reason and it is desirable for safety reasons to have a longer runway for all fixed-wing flights. All of these aircraft are utilized during fire season but must be stationed outside of a central location (outside of Colville), which adds time, risk and expense to all operations.
- Additionally, facilities are limited for pilots and flight crews and current annual expenditures are made to provide less than adequate facilities at this time.
- It would be desirable to see an upgraded airport, that would be attractive for increased utilization and make it attractive for additional investment to the Fire Aviation program on the Colville National

Forest.

Robert Smith, Director, Air Operations, US Customs and Border Protection

- US Customs and Border Protection Office of Air and Marine—Spokane Air Branch would like to commend you for considering ways to improve and/or expand airport and flight services in the Colville area. Spokane Air Branch would be very interested in self serve Jet A fuel tanks at the airport as we now have to travel to Deer Park, WA; Omak, WA; or Bonners Ferry, Idaho to get jet fuel when conducting operations in the Colville area. If self serve Jet-A tanks were available at the Colville Airport we could refuel much more quickly and return to our border security mission with less transit time which will increase our border security efforts. If the pumps are self serve and payable by credit card, then we can refuel at all hours with minimal impact to normal airport operations.

Richard Nichols, Mayor of Colville March 6, 2009

- It is commonly thought throughout the business community that without a new airport that will allow modern small jet business planes, our future economic development will be significantly limited, at best.
- Tourism and recreation visitors who add to our economy will also continue to be restricted due to unreasonable travel distance by automobile.
- Includes business park development that will support light industries and other uses that will produce dividends to the local and regional economy.
- Hospital and service agencies must now rely on the limitations of our outdated municipal airport that does not meet federal design and safety requirements.

Board of County Commissioners of Stevens County March 9, 2009

- The Board is fully supportive of the efforts to develop a new Colville Airport.
- The plan to develop an airport that will accommodate business and commuter small jet aircraft will definitely increase our regional ability to attract new businesses and ultimately create new employment opportunities.
- Although not conclusive, the County and City of Colville are giving preliminary consideration toward a partnership to maximize the airport potential throughout the county and region.
- We believe that a new airport is vital component toward bettering the lives of our county and regional citizens as well as increasing our accessibility to people throughout Washington State.

Cindy Montgomery, President, Colville Chamber of Commerce March 20, 2009

- The Colville Chamber of commerce supports development of a new airport that will serve northeastern Washington State.
- For decades the City of Colville has been attempting to establish a new business and commuter small jet airport in northeastern Washington. Attracting new business development to our area is critical. Most businesses now expect an airport in the community that accommodates corporate jets. The new facility would enable the cities and counties of northeastern Washington to increase business, light industry, tourism, and other contemporary airborne services.
- For security reasons, both national and regional, the airport would provide access for first responders.

Leslie Jones, Executive Director Tri-County Economic Development District April 28, 2009

- It is our pleasure to support the efforts to develop a regional airport and light industrial park in Colville, Washington. Future economic growth is dependent upon an updated airport to support air freight and business class jets.

- The availability of industrial land is also a limiting factor in Stevens County, with industrial offerings occupying less than three acres. The introduction of a regional airport and business park would provide much needed industrial capacity and provide infrastructure needed to attract businesses and create jobs.
- Diversifying the economic base with a new airport and industrial park will provide the economic stability our communities need to mitigate the boom and bust cycles of our natural recreation and tourism based economy.
- Visitors will benefit from improved access to our various recreation and tourism opportunities.

Fran Bolt, Mayor of Marcus March 20, 2009

- This project has been identified as “sorely needed” for more than 2 decades.
- Provide an enormous opportunity for economic development, increased services and additional employment throughout the Stevens County area.
- Has the support of Mt. Carmel Hospital, Colville School District, a new Dialysis Center and many local, state, and federal agencies that are located throughout the region.
- Will increase the efficiency and cut costs of the individual services these agencies provide, especially those relying on air travel such as hospital patient transfers, forest fire fighting, parcel by air deliveries, and the other air transport services provided to our citizens,
- Increase in tourism and recreational visitors will also bolster regional economics.