

## DRAFT Meeting Notes



Stantec

<b>Advisory Committee Meeting</b>	
Groton-New London Airport Master Plan Update Working Paper #2	
Date:	May 20, 2009
Place/Time:	Groton-New London Airport CT AVCRAD (Connecticut Army National Guard building) 1:00 PM
Next Meeting:	Mid Summer 2009
Attendees:	Denny Hicks, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut Syma Ebbin, resident Harry Smith, City of New London Krys Kowalski, ConnDOT Gail Lattrell, FAA Barry Pallanack, ConnDOT Carl Straud., Chair, Airport Advisory Comm. Tom Seidel, SCCOG David Head, ConnDOT Catherine Young, ConnDOT GON APM David Kozak, DEP Ron Price, QED Ervin Deck, Stantec Carol Morris, Morris Communications.
Distribution:	All Attendees; Project Web Site

Ervin Deck, Stantec, began the meeting with introductions of all attendees and an overview of the agenda.

Erv reviewed Working Paper #1, stating that overall Groton-New London Airport (GON) is an exceptionally well-run and well-maintained airport, with a very moderate growth forecast. Working Paper #2 will look at these conditions and evaluate what could be needed over the next 20 years. Based on the forecast, there is not going to be a huge demand for services..

A correction for Working Paper #1 was to revise the Based Aircraft Forecast slightly upward; this was not based on increased forecast, but based on a correction in the number of current based aircraft.

*Forecast:* General discussion ensued on why the forecast is for an increase when use of the airport has declined. It was explained that the forecast has indicated growth to be flat for the next five years, and then all indications are that activity will pick up. Aviation fuel prices have been stable for the past year and a half. The Noise Analysis will be run based on existing and also on projected usage so it is important not to underestimate. Also, if the need for new apron space or hanger space increases, a plan must be in

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place to provide it. This increase would be based on demand.

From an FAA perspective, they evaluate industry trends, aircraft orders, activity at other airports, terminal forecasts for general aviation, etc. The industry has been flat for four years, but aviation is not expected to flounder permanently. Typically, to be prepared, a slight increase is forecasted, unless such a forecast would trigger a big difference in a corresponding action, for example a runway extension. This forecast does not mean we are not growing the airport; it does allow us to be prepared.

Erv emphasized that the growth rate is very conservative. There are no predictions for major changes in any airport operations. Stantec looked at infrastructure and facilities, and asked, "Do they meet forecast needs." Other than apron space and hangers, GON does meet forecast needs.

*Runways:* The length is adequate for most circumstances, and width is more than adequate in the main runway. This was illustrated by the list of various sizes of aircraft runway requirements. The crosswind runway, which is more important for smaller aircraft, is also adequate.

It was noted that there is an error in the report, stating that the crosswind runway is 50 feet wider than it needs to be, and this is being corrected: it is the main runway that is wider than it needs to be.

Rather than correct runway length now, it is more cost effective to wait until a reconstruction is already scheduled. Airport Manager Catherine Young said that the main runway was just reconstructed.

*Taxiways:* All are in good shape and need no change.

*Safety Areas:* Runway safety areas and runway protection zones are the two areas where there is a problem. These areas are getting a lot of attention nationwide in many airports.

Erv explained that both ends of the main runway have inadequate runway safety areas, as there is water and rocky shore area at the end of the runway, not safe for landings. This can be fixed by filling the water and grading it, which is not a good idea environmentally. Another solution is to shorten the runway, which is not viable as it reduces the utilization of the airport. The best solution is to install an EMAS, which is a cellular concrete block system, providing for a softer, safer impact. The permit for this is in process. Runway safety areas are FAA's highest priority and requirements are legislatively mandated.

There was a general discussion of safety issues. It was commented that fog is a real problem at coastal airports, and it was questioned as to why pilots are allowed to land in bad weather, that it would be cheaper to change flight regulations than to install expensive safety equipment. Airport officials responded that landing is at the pilot's discretion, and that they, not the tower, are in command of the aircraft. It was noted that the FAA has been working with the Transportation Board to make pilots more

knowledgeable and make better decisions. The EMAS would stop an error in judgment from being more dangerous and tragic.

It was asked how many accidents have taken place on the crosswinds runway at GON, and the airport manager stated that none have taken place.

*Runway Protection Zones:* Erv then showed a map of the runway protection zones, which extend outside airport land into a residential area called Jupiter Point. It was noted that these runway protection zones have been in every master plan for this airport and at some point an easement could be considered as protection for these zones. FAA recommends that airports try to get zoning or easements to try to protect these zones from development, but that outright purchase is not typically financially feasible.

Erv introduced Ron Price to give his presentation on TERPS (Terminal Instrument Procedures).

*TERPS:* TERPS define different procedures for different runways. The FAA sets visual and ceiling minimums, and these lowest values are published. This should be checked, because any obstruction (also called penetration of air space) could have changed over time. At the minimum in this approach is a 200-foot ceiling and ½-mile visibility. This is for a non-instrument approach. Some of the approach minimums shown at GON are higher than normal, and usually this is because of an obstacle. It may be possible to look at these and get the minimums lower. The higher-level values are affected by trees and could be improved by better lighting.

*GON VOR Status:* Ron explained that the VOR is a navigational aid that pilots use to fly from point to point. He said they checked on if the FAA was planning to decommission the VOR, and the answer is no. It was upgraded ten years ago. It is still used by area airports for approach fixes as well as by other planes. Planes now use satellite navigation, and VORs are expensive to maintain. The VOR may or may not serve as part of the backup system for sat nav. The VOR is not costing the state any money.

Erv noted that Stantec wanted to find out if the VOR land would be needed for something else, and we have found it will not be.

Ron noted that there are some obstacles (trees) on the approach to runway 15 and that in order to pursue use of this, improvements in lighting are necessary. An LED upgrade was noted. Ron also noted that the tree should be marked or lit. If not, nighttime approaches would be prohibited. He stated that it is important for safety reasons to get this procedure published.

There was a discussion about the purpose of a recent tree clearing and was it possible to use the discussed technique to avoid taking more trees down. Airport officials noted that the cut was nowhere near that approach path and had nothing to do with the nav system.

It was also commented that the public wants to avoid the need to light trees in a coastal

preserve, and it was noted that curved approaches will be developed soon and that will help.

*Runway Protection Zones, continued:* Erv noted that the plan shows runway protection zone areas that are not under the control of the airport. The Spicer Tree Farm, and the golf course are included, along with the park, part of the highway and the railroad.

There was brief discussion of the possibility of a land swap with land around the VOR, but it was concluded that the FAA would not allow it and that it was not marketable.

*Lights:* All lighting met standards and requirements. The new technology is moving toward LED lights. This is controversial because some opinions are that they do not melt off snow, but others say that snow just blows off them and they don't stick. In any event, the price is such that they are typically only replaced when existing fixtures need to be replaced.

*Apron Space:* The amount of space needed is based on how many itinerant airplanes there are. Based on projections, GON will need an increase in apron space. If the numbers hold true, the airport would not have to add space, but can simply change usage.

*Hangers:* Needs are hard to predict because capacity depends on the type of aircraft being housed. Hangers are now at 80% of GON capacity and this means that GON should begin to think about where and how to build more, especially conventional hangers. Sometime in the next five years, GON will need apron space. If you build hangers, you need less apron space. Looking at the map, the following evaluates where this space could come from. GON cannot use the VOR space. The triangular piece by Airport Road (2 acres) would be excellent for hangers or aprons – and there is also a large tract between the two FBOs that would be good for both. Another possibility is the area that is now used as parking. With no commercial activity in sight, GON does not need as much parking as is currently available. That is prime space for an FBO. Also, it is possible that the other side of the road from the terminal could be used for non-aviation uses. These locations are all dry and available for use.

It was noted that some of the land across the road is adjacent to wetlands and that land would not likely be the best choice.

*Terminal Building:* The terminal building is fine now, with no expansion needed. The maintenance and snow removal building is a somewhat small for what it needs to do. In time an expansion may be necessary.

*Security:* In terms of airport security, no systems are required because GON is not a commercial airport. The staff is doing a good job. In terms of security fencing, the land is fenced, the water is not. Water fencing is not required and is very expensive. One recommendation is that GON form an aviation security committee.

## **Summary**

- *Adequate facilities:* runway, taxiway, passenger terminal, access road, auto parking, ARFF facility.
- *Needs improvement:* the airfield lighting (due to technical upgrades), GA facilities (aprons and hangers), ARFF and SRE equipment – upgrades and replacements as equipment ages. (Note: These are expensive and need to be carefully considered, as this will be a slow transition for pilots), SRE maintenance building, instrument approach procedures, Security adjustments and LPV Runways 23 and 33.

It was noted that comments on this Working Paper should be submitted in writing as they will be part of the final document. The next step is developing alternatives and design concepts for alternatives and that will take place this summer. The first public information meeting will also take place in the summer, giving the Advisory Committee time to comment on the next Working Paper before it is presented to the public. The environmental overview will take place in the late summer, along with the second public meeting.

**Other Comments**

Question: Has FAA given any thought to expected sea level rise in terms of the airport.

Response: Runways are inspected every year and if there is a problem they are written up to make a plan to deal with the problem. We may look at this from a state perspective, i.e., will all these coastal airports still be viable in 50 years – and if not, what then? But a significant rise in sea level is 50 years out and is beyond the timeframe of this plan update.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.

Submitted by:  
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Morris Communications

**STANTEC CONSULTING SERVICES INC.**

Reviewed and approved by:  
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