



**Bentonville
Municipal
Airport
Master Plan**

**Public Forum #2 – February 3, 2015
Meeting Summary**

Presentation and sign-in sheets are also available.

Summary of Meeting Discussion (outside of Presentation)

Pam Keidel-Adams of Kimley-Horn led the presentation. Attendees asked questions and provided comments as the meeting proceeded. The questions, along with the discussion that followed, is provided below.

Q: What was the growth rate used for the population forecast method that was selected for the based aircraft forecast?

A: The rate that was used was 2.7 percent growth which reflects the population in Benton County.

Follow-up: An attendee noted that, currently, the City of Bentonville population is growing closer to a 3.5 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

Q: Did the based aircraft forecast include the anticipated rise in “tail-dragger” aircraft?

A: Yes, those aircraft were accounted for in the preferred forecasts.

Q: What does extending the runway to 5,015 feet give the Airport that it does not already have?

A: It would allow for a greater range of aircraft to utilize the airport as well as allow for a greater percentage of the critical aircraft fleet to utilize the Airport.

Follow-up: An attendee noted that he had taken off from VBT in a Cessna Citation Sovereign (critical aircraft) and flown non-stop to Washington State. He feels that lengthening the runway is not needed at this time. He asked to be able to see the numbers that justify this lengthening and what additional aircraft would actually be accommodated.

Follow-up: An attendee noted that lengthening the runway to 5,015 feet would have a significant impact on insurance premiums; lengthening the runway would open the door for a lot more charter operations at VBT. Also, a pilot who operates a King Air indicated that he needs more runway length during the summer.

Comment: The plan, as it is presented, makes sense if the FAA will not let Runway 18-36 and the turf runway share RSAs; however, they (Airport) are still of the mindset that it should be developed as an alternative grass operating area (AGOA), not a turf runway. Having the 300' separation will limit development on the west side and make the Airport less of a community feature.

Response: The FAA has repeatedly stated verbally and in their response to the 7480 report that it will be considered a turf runway.

Comment: In response to the discussion on approach minimums, an attendee noted that Rogers Municipal Airport (ROG) has the same RNAV that VBT has with the same separation (300’).

Response: The limiting factor for approaches at VBT is the lack of full length parallel taxiway.

Follow-up: An attendee noted that ½ mile to ¾ mile visibility differences should not be driving operational standards at an Airport, as the difference between them is too small.

Comment: An attendee commented that he was very happy with the work that had been done on the Master Plan Update to date; but wanted the project team to know that they still want the grass strip to be called an AGOA that should not be subject to FAA guidance on runway design standards.

Comment: An attendee commented that having a 5,015-foot long runway would be very nice, but he had the following comments:

- 1) It would cost a great deal of money and would garner a very small return
- 2) He would like to see a justification for the 5,015-foot long runway
- 3) He wanted to see more input from the public to determine what projects are completed at VBT. He noted that he would rather see PAPI than a 5,015-foot long runway.

Response: Ben (City Engineer and Airport Sponsor) stated that the Airport currently has a prioritized list of projects for funding that includes PAPIs. He noted that lengthening the runway was likely a long way out and not a top priority for the Airport. He also noted that the FAA is currently reviewing the priority list.

Comment: On the north side of the Airport, there are many private parcels that some do not want to “take” from the owners. Additionally, it was noted that some people do not want to limit the property rights of the land owners.

Response: The Airport could not do anything to those properties until they were owned. It was recommended that the property be owned fee simple, but easements are the next best option. The most important thing is that the approaches to the runways are not compromised.

Q: Regarding the AGOA (turf runway), is land acquisition still needed if the separation distances are 240’ compared to 300’?

A: Yes, land acquisition will be needed regardless of the separation distances to accommodate the full-length parallel taxiway on the west side.

Q: Was there any discussion of splitting the difference between the north and south ends of the runway when lengthening the runway? (As it was presented, there were two options: a north extension and a south extension).

A: Yes, but from the analysis done on the south side of the Airport, any extension to the south will have impacts due to the location of the RPZ which is abutted to the existing roadway. Any extension to the south would have these impacts but the alternatives needed to examine the impacts of an extension to the north and south, however, splitting the extension would have the same result on the south. It was also noted that AR-12 (SW Regional Airport Boulevard) is being expanded to five lanes, further limiting the ability of the Airport to maintain a clear RPZ.

Comment: An attendee asked for clarification of the AGOA vs. turf runway issue.

Response: Pam went over all of the surfaces that are present around a runway and all of their separation requirements. She further explained that even though the AGOA standard had been used in the FAA’s Northwest Mountain Region, this is not the standard set by FAA as a whole. Currently, the FAA does not have specific standards related to AGOAs and that their determination has been done on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What are the chances of the FAA granting a variance on their ruling against the AGOA?

A: With runway safety areas (RSAs), there are no modifications to standards. Pam noted that this was due to a crash that occurred within a modified RSA. Pam also recommended that when the Airport goes to discuss the AGOA vs. turf runway issue with the FAA that they do not use the word “variance.”

Comment: An attendee noted that the ditch that would be created due to conformance with FAA standards for a turf runway would create a huge safety concern for the Airport. He noted that an AGOA would be a much safer option for the Airport and operations on both the AGOA and Runway 18-36.

Comment: An attendee noted that if the turf runway is put on the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) instead of an AGOA, the FAA will say that they cannot go back to an AGOA. The FAA has used this “circular logic” in the past.

Response: The FAA will not approve the Master Plan or the ALP if it includes an AGOA.

Comment: The Airport Manager commented that the Airport needs to decide how long they want to fight the designation of a turf runway vs. AGOA. If they fight it too long it could end up hurting them in the long run when they are trying to get funding for projects.

Comment: An attendee noted that it was frustrating that the FAA would hold them to these standards due to the decreased safety and increased costs of a turf runway compared to an AGOA. He noted that having the ditch would create a huge safety concern and also cause water drainage issues. The designation of a turf runway would be agnostic to real world considerations.

Q: What if the Airport pays for the Master Plan and the cost of constructing the AGOA?

A: Ben explained that they have two months to make the case for an AGOA, otherwise they will lose another year due to the planting/grow season. At this point, it is more prudent to continue with the Master Plan with the FAA.

Follow-up: An attendee wanted to reiterate that they are dealing with a confined space and an AGOA will increase safety.

Q: Would there be any benefit at this point to utilizing their contacts in Washington to get an AGOA? (It was noted that they are close with the head of the General Aviation (GA) Caucus).

A: Ben answered that they should meet with the FAA Southwest Region first; if that does not go well, then they can go the political/national route.

Comment: It was noted that there is nothing in FAA Orders that allows for an AGOA, it has only been mentioned in the FAA Northwest Region.

Comment: It was noted that because this is the City of Bentonville’s document, we can reflect the City’s opinions. It is up to the City to determine how they want to approach the issue.