

NOME AIRPORT RUNWAY SAFETY AREA EXPANSION - PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #1

September 17, 2009

4:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M

Old Saint Joseph's Church, Nome, AK

Meeting Summary:

The first Public Open House meeting covered both the Nome Airport Master Plan project and the Runway Safety Area Expansion project. DOT&PF representatives in attendance were Cindie Little, Ethan Birkholz, RJ Stumpf, and Ivet Hall. Brooks and Associates was represented by Anne Brooks. Project presentations were made at 4:30pm and 6:30pm. The Master Plan project was introduced and discussed by Royce Conlon, of PDC. Patrick Cotter of PDC was also in attendance. The RSA Expansion project was presented by Hans Arnett and Sara Lindberg, with Cindy Anderson in attendance. After the presentations, questions were answered in a group format. As time permitted, DOT&PF and project representatives discussed the projects and answered questions individually. Meeting attendees are identified on the attached sign-in sheets.

Hans Arnett with USKH kicked off the Runway Safety Area Expansion portion of the meeting with the following comments:

- USKH has past experience with the successful relocation of fish streams to accommodate expansion of airports in Alaska. We have also successfully addressed environmental and regulatory issues associated fish stream relocation.
- One of our goals is to design a new river channel that looks and functions like a natural channel.
- One of the biggest issues facing the Nome Airport project and the relocation of the Snake River is the impact on the local population, since the river runs through town.
- An important part of the meeting this evening is to find out what concerns the residents of Nome have regarding the proposed river relocation options, and to gather special information from local residents that non-residents, like ourselves, do not have access to.
- The two proposed alignments have common starting points but vary considerably. The New River Mouth option is shorter and would presumably be less expensive, but access to the west near the mouth would be necessary, possibly meaning a bridge is needed. This option would reduce the flow at the existing mouth, but there would still be flow contributed by Center Creek and Dry Creek to the lower river. The second option involves a much longer route that reconnects to the lower river.
- Some of the issues associated with constructing a new mouth are known, including:
 - Need to provide access to the west for mining and other uses.
 - The location of a new mouth will change through time, unless special efforts are taken to stabilize it.
 - Effects on adjacent landowners, such as NovaGold.

- Changes at the Port of Nome and the small boat harbor. Less water flow means less dilution of existing contamination. Breakup of the harbor might occur later.
- What further issues do the people of Nome foresee?
- Some of these issues can be overcome by the second option, which reconnects to the lower river. However, this raises some different issues:
 - There may be more land ownership issues.
 - There is still a disruption of access, but to a lesser degree
 - Contaminated soils will be a much bigger issue in this option.
 - Because it is longer, this option is probably more expensive.
- Both options will require construction in permafrost.
- These two alignments are very preliminary and will change as design and study efforts proceed. It is very important that the thoughts and ideas of the public are taken into consideration, because that information will help the design to move forward.
- Please use the comment sheets to make any concerns known.
 - Will this affect your subsistence use of the area?
 - Will it affect your access to property or recreational areas?
 - Do you use the port? What issues are you concerned about?

Sara Lindberg with USKH continued with some of the following points:

- We want to talk to you about the Environmental Review Process for the Runway Safety Area Expansion Project.
- The end result of an Environmental Review is a decision document that analyzes the impacts of multiple alternatives.
- The goal of the process is to determine a preferred alternative for the expansion. The potential Snake River relocation is just one potential alternative, though we know that any expansion will likely require relocation of the river.
- We are currently early in the process in the information gathering stage. We will talk to various agencies and complete field studies regarding wetlands, fish habitats, contamination, subsistence issues, and so on.
- All of this is why these meetings and public input are so important. We get input from the locals about the resources of the area. You, the locals, are the experts. Please tell us what you think.

Questions regarding the Runway Safety Area Expansion included:

- Why is the expansion so large?
 - *Answer:* We do not want to have to move the Snake River again, so we are taking into account the longest probable runway and safety area expansion. The 10,000 foot runway is based for large aircraft use in the future, such as cargo planes. Smaller planes can also use this size of runway.
- What about building a bridge instead of relocating the river?
 - *Answer:* The cost of a runway bridge is prohibitive, and we do not yet know the costs for the river move.

- How about military involvement in the construction of the river relocation? C6? National Defense?
 - *Answer:* The military will be brought into the project for input.
- Why not expand the Crosswind runway to the north, instead?
 - *Answer:* There are hazardous waste sites which would cost too much money for the DOT to acquire the land and clean up.
- Why move the river instead of using an Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS)?
 - *Answer:* With 600 feet of overrun required, the river would still need to be moved. Cordova is currently a test site to see how the EMAS will work. It is currently untested in the Arctic and expensive.
- How does the Nome runway length compare to Bethel and Kotzebue?
 - *Answer:* Each airport was looked at individually. Nome needs to look at the long term. The State of Alaska wants the airport to live and grow.
- How soon would construction start?
 - *Answer:* The river move and the environmental process is lengthy, perhaps as much as 2 years. The FAA has a goal of being built by 2015. It will take about 2 years to build and will go to bid by 2012. The rest of the master plan implementation will be from 0-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-20 years, and hopefully funded within the timeframe.
- The runway is 12 feet above sea level and one of the lowest in the nation. Within 25 years the runway will be inundated. What about relocation? What about floodproofing?
 - *Answer:* Relocation has been looked at. It's very expensive to relocate an airport. The river has been relocated before. After WWII the western end of the runway was moved, and the river was relocated.

General comments regarding the airport and Snake River relocation included:

- The DOT is talking about building a road to Nome. Has this been factored in as an alternative access method?
- The runway flooded two times in the last five years.
- Need to come flying in from the other way. Winter needs ILS on the other end.
- Get runway approaches away from the city. The way that it is now there are too many airspace obstructions. ILS is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile.
- The DOT put in a parallel runway in Bethel.
- Move runway upland. Build two parallel runways big enough for 737-400.
- Why not extend Crosswind to the north? Won't need to dredge, just to fill.
- How about a runway extension with fill and culverts?
- The runway is too low, down in a hole. What are we going to do about visibility, flooding, and getting to a higher altitude?
- There are issues with ILS.
- What about a parallel runway? Leave the airport alone and build a parallel runway up above the crosswind for the big jets.

- We would need parallel taxiways if the runway is that long.
- If the river is moved, the current turning basin in town would be a horrible eyesore and unsanitary.
- We just put \$20 million into the port...why move the river away?
- We would need to keep water flowing through the harbor.
- The crab cannery would have to move the pipeline. The fish plant would be required to build a pipeline 2000 feet out. It would affect the business and fisheries in Nome.
- Moving river away will not eliminate the need for dredging—it will still need to be dredged.
- This would affect commercial fishing.
- Add the military to the agency contact list.
- Create recreational opportunities near dredge pond.
- All alternatives should be looked at.
- The harbor has raw sewage. If we abandon it, what will happen with contamination?
- If the mouth is re-routed, we need to re-route the port. There is raw sewage in port, and we'd need to fill in the port to prevent it from getting toxic.
- There are tanks at the port that leak, and the water flushes it out.
- The longer route may not be contaminated; ponds aren't red to show acid leech.
- Recreation is huge along that portion of the Snake River.
- Will it disturb the harbor?
- Will it dilute the harbor?
- Fish can't make an instant transfer from fresh to salt. There's no estuary. They need a zone where they can acclimate. Chums are the least able to make that transition.
- Lower option (on the map) is mostly already thawed ground.
- Changes in the port would lower property value.
- The river is the main winter trail out of town for mushers and snow machines.
- There is lots of boat use in the Snake River. If the mouth is changed, kids wouldn't be able to go to the harbor to fish.
- Can't take the harbor away! It's the fishing hole.
- Fog and flooding is already a problem with the airport.
- Walrus hunters use the port to launch their boats.
- The bluff has been eaten out by storms. If we go for the new mouth option, the road would have to be built away from the bluff.
- Include the Coast Guard in the contact list.

Written comments regarding the Runway Safety Area Expansion Included:

- What is the history of the Snake River before the runway?
- How many Nome frost heaves? What is/was the cause? Is it solved? [sic]
- Blowing snow conditions and flooding.
- Longer route has contamination issues if there is construction through dredged soils.

- If the Snake River is relocated, how does this affect land ownership?
- Permafrost issue is unknown. Never dealt with before.
- Why does runway airstrip need to be doubled?
- Coastal longshore transport at river mouth—what’s the effect on land holders and transportation west of the mouth?
- Without the river push, is the ice movement going to be less?
- River may help reduce contamination in port by flushing it out.
- Cheaper should not be the deciding factor. If it is, then don’t do anything.
- Will this mean less dredging?
- Saltwater intrusion into the Snake River stops at the Bering Air property.
- Use the river relocation to make ponds and new housing lots.
- Need a bridge for beach access.
- Map area marked for removal of land for sight distance.
- For lower river, 40 to 50 foot depth needed.
- Remove tundra from the lake and make it a 60 foot depth; use excavated land near dredge pond.
- The “sharpie” map looks at many options and not focused on one.
- Dredge pool on map is 80 feet deep.