



U. S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Aviation
Administration

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JAN 23 2009

January 20, 2009

Mr. Steven Hicks, Acting Assistant County Administrator
101-C Mounts Bay Road
P.O. Box 8784
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8784

Re: James City County, Airport Feasibility Study

Dear Mr. Hicks:

We are in receipt of the Revised Airport Layout Plan Set submitted on your behalf by your consultant, R. Robert Kimball, requesting our review and comments for Chapter 6 of the James City County Airport Feasibility Study dated November 26, 2008. We have provided our comments on the attached separate pages. We are also in receipt of comments from the Virginia Department of Aviation dated December 23, 2008. Please ensure that these comments are addressed as well.

The letter from the Virginia Department of Aviation provides a nice summary of what is needed to close out this grant and move to the next step of the process.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at (703) 661-1365.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Breeden, AICP
Airport Planner
Washington Airports District Office

cc: Scott Denny, DOAV
Ron Deck, R. Robert Kimball & Associates

Comments on the James City County Feasibility Study
Chapter 6, Alternatives Evaluation Results – November 11-26-2008
Date: January 20, 2009

Chapter 6 Alternatives Evaluation Results

General Comments

We concur with the comments from Mr. Denny with the Virginia Department of Aviation dated December 23, 2008.

Exhibit 6-1

Environmental

1. Is it safe to assume that there will be no environmental impacts with Alternative B for potential recreation, wildlife, historic, wetlands or floodplains if the existing airport is brought up to standards (i.e. runway safety areas, widen runway, tree clearing, remove top of landfill, aircraft parking apron relocation etc). It would appear that some of the projects would have some environmental impacts associated with them. Please clarify.

2. Land Acquisition – The chart shows that a total of 106 acres would be acquired from the existing airport versus 416 acres for the new greenfield site. Does the existing airport have sufficient land in fee simple or easements to protect the airspace surrounding the facility? If not, additional land, preferably in fee simple, would be needed to bring the airport up to FAA standards. Please quantify the amount of land required and update table accordingly.

Engineering

3. Exhibit 6-1 states that the non-sanitary land fill cap may need to be lowered for the existing airport under special airport needs. The new airport site states that only minor special engineering needs will be required. Is this an “apples to apples” comparison? Would be better to state that special engineering needs will be considered during the site selection process?

Operational

4. Exhibit 6-1 states that the existing site may require some modifications to FAA standards. Previous correspondence and communication to the study indicated that no modification to FAA standards would be considered for the existing airport site. Please update exhibit and narrative.

5. Exhibit 6-1 addresses obstruction removal. Are existing obstructions located on airport property? If not, how much additional land would be required to remove the existing obstructions?

6. Both airport sites are evaluated on the ability to meet user needs. The existing site is listed as “would” meet needs to a high degree versus “could” meet needs to a very high degree with the Greenfield site. It would be helpful to reword this section to provide a bit more clarity to better compare the two sites.

6A. It might be helpful to include another major category called Support of Aviation Demand or something similar. There is a risk of the possibility of the current facility closing to aviation traffic. If this were to happen, then the residents of James City County would be required to drive outside of the immediate area to have access to a general aviation facility. This might be an important point to consider in the evaluation

Economic

7. The total estimated cost for each alternative is a bit misleading. Our office recently held a teleconference with the study team to discuss how the costs for each alternative were derived. It is our understanding that the cost for the existing airport includes only the costs for bringing the airport up to FAA standards and does not include acquisition costs. These acquisition costs of the existing airport site could easily double the figure from 3.2 million to 6.4 million dollars or greater. The costs for the greenfield site were derived from recently completed new greenfield airports in Virginia. The costs were then factored up to include potential higher land costs in James City County. This office would suggest adding some additional documentation to describe the assumptions made for the cost estimates in the narrative report. Would it be reasonable to either obtain the current assessment by James City County of the current airport facility or have some discussions with the current owner to provide a potential range of costs to acquire the facility. While this office understands a detailed appraisal of the current facility is outside of the current scope of services, a potential range of the possible acquisition costs should be obtainable.

8. Under the economic benefits. It is highly unlikely that a new airport would be constructed outside of the service area evaluated as part of this study. Please update narrative in the table.

9. The FAA concurs with the recommendation of Alternative “C” as the preferred option with the caveat that the local government must first review and adopt the findings of the report. Similar to the request by the Virginia Department of Aviation, please provide this office with a copy of the resolution of the adoption of this report by the James City County Board of Supervisors.

10. If James City County elects to move forward with the site selection study, the following is a summary of the major items that need to be accomplished:

- Adoption of resolution to continue with a site selection study within the boundaries established with this study.
- James City must then agree to become the sponsor of the Airport. A copy of the grant assurances that are required to be signed are available on the FAA website. This office would suggest having the County's legal staff review the grant assurances for FAA AIP grants early in the process and our office would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.
- While there is no current commitment of FAA funding for the project, the soonest a grant could be offered to continue to advance the planning effort would be next fiscal year (around March 2010). Before funding can be completed, the County must go through the selection process of hiring a consultant for this effort unless the previous advertisement covered this scope of services.
- Our office has enjoyed working with your staff on this project and would be happy to assist in the development of a draft scope of services and preliminary budget for the project prior to Federal funds being requested.