

STATE OF COLORADO

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CDOT – Aeronautics/FAA Key Points of Discussion Joint Planning Conference (JPC) Meadow Lake Airport April 20, 2006

A Colorado Department of Transportation – Division of Aeronautics (CDOT)/ Federal Aviation Administration – Denver Airports District Office (FAA) Joint Planning Conference (JPC) was held at the Meadow Lake Airport On April 20, 2006. In attendance from CDOT and the FAA were:

John Bauer, Assistant Manager, FAA
Marc Miller, Project Manager/Lead Compliance Office, FAA
Travis Vallin, Director, CDOT – Aeronautics
Chris Pomeroy, Senior Aviation Planner, CDOT – Aeronautics
TK Gwin, Pavement Engineer, CDOT – Aeronautics

Chris Pomeroy started the meeting with by introducing the above individuals and providing a quick background and purpose of the JPC process. Pomeroy stated the format of the meeting was to be quite informal where the effective exchange of information between CDOT/FAA and the audience was paramount.

John Bauer gave a quick status report on the current Airport Layout Plan (ALP) Update planning process. Bauer advised that the FAA grant offer for Federal Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding to support the ALP project had been brought down with the FAA on this day and were currently being executed. Bauer further advised that the process is in the very preliminary stages where initial drawings submitted to the CDOT and the FAA have been reviewed and comments returned to the Meadow Lake Airport Association (MLAA) Board and Airport Development Group (ADG). Bauer emphasized that we are a long way out from final approval at this point.

Pomeroy gave a general background as to the role of CDOT as it pertains to airport funding from both the Federal and State perspective. Pomeroy also discussed the role of CDOT in working with the FAA to develop Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) for Colorado's General Aviation (G.A.) airports. Pomeroy also provided a general perspective as to the significance of the Meadow Lake Airport in the Colorado Airport System. Pomeroy advised that due to the number of based aircraft and activity levels at the airport, the airport is considered of major importance to the state aviation system where the maintenance and safety of the facility are important to CDOT. Bauer provided the FAA perspective on the importance of the airport in the Federal airport system. Bauer advised that although the airport is privately owned, it is eligible for Federal AIP funding due to its status as a reliever airport. Currently the airport is a reliever airport for the Colorado Springs Airport and as such, the FAA also views the airport as an important airport in its system. Bauer stated that it is because of this reliever designation that the FAA was supportive of working with CDOT to fund the payment of the loan that recently purchased land around the airport to protect the future of the airport. Bauer stated that this initial investment in the land by the FAA was a very substantial investment. Not only is the airport now protected, the FAA will be able to realize a return on its investment because of the value of the land. Now that the land has been purchased, Bauer advised this meeting will be important in determining the next steps in future of the airport.

The point was made throughout the meeting by CDOT and the FAA about the constraints in funding, particularly AIP funding. It was explained that currently 38 airports, including Meadow Lake, compete for approximately \$6.2 Million a year in Colorado. Just like Meadow Lake, all of these airports are continually politicking and making their case for their share of the funding as well. The FAA and CDOT also pointed out that the future reauthorization of the Federal AIP program is very much a topic of national debate at this point. The current four year AIP program is set to expire at the end of the 2007 fiscal year. The FAA contends that there is not enough money in the Aviation Trust Fund to support the high levels of AIP funding we have seen the past several years. At this point what the new AIP program will look like in 2008 is anyone's guess. There should be no doubt that

the future of the AIP program will have tremendous impacts on all airports vying for funding including Meadow Lake.

Pomeroy opened up a question and answer format focusing on a few key areas; Funding, Airport Layout and Miscellaneous.

The question was asked if it appeared there would be sufficient funds by the end of the 2006 fiscal year to pay off the land loan? Pomeroy advised the answer was no. The FAA and CDOT have put a plan in place to pay the loan off by FY 2008 utilizing the airport's Non-Primary Entitlement funds of \$150,00 per year and some additional AIP funds to meet the 2008 goal.

The question was asked, what will it take to get money to come Meadow Lake's way? Bauer explained that undertaking the ALP process was the first step. This would identify project priorities and associated costs and allow the FAA and CDOT to fit Meadow Lake into the CIP. Bauer further discussed the negative impacts of political action such as "place naming" through a particular congressional delegation. Bauer made the point that as long as a particular project is supported by the FAA, the chances that the project will be completed is very good. Bauer stressed that the required process, including such things as environmental action, can take several years to complete.

The follow-on question was asked, what year is Meadow Lake at this point? Pomeroy explained that considering current funding scenarios in the CIP and other airports in the queue, 7 to 10 years to accomplish the construction of a new runway at Meadow Lake that meets FAA standards is most realistic at this time. Travis Vallin made the point that the funding made available by CDOT and the FAA to purchase the land at Meadow Lake came relatively unexpectedly and was a one time opportunity. As such, the redirection of funding to purchase the land came at the expense of other airports. Vallin further pointed out that current CDOT and FAA funding priorities at Meadow Lake will consist of paying off the loan and looking ahead to securing funding for a new primary runway that meets FAA standards.

Marc Miller commented that it was important to keep in mind that between now and the time a new runway is constructed, the FAA and CDOT are determined to maintain the existing pavement as to extend its useful life to the greatest extent possible. Pomeroy added that there are many steps in the "process" as previously mentioned by Bauer that need to be done before a construction project can begin at Meadow Lake. As an example, environmental work alone can take up to two years to complete.

The question was asked if the development in housing around the airport would defeat the program? Pomeroy discussed that incompatible land use around airports is a very big concern nationally. He explained that the current grant assurances tied to Federal funding require the airports sponsor, in this case the MLAA, make a reasonable effort to protect the airport from incompatible land use. The challenge faced by many airports including Meadow Lake is that immediately outside the airport boundary land use control falls into another jurisdiction – in this case El Paso County. Pomeroy recommended MLAA continue its efforts in working with El Paso County to protect the airport. As the sponsor, MLAA has made a good effort in working to protect the airport from incompatible land use and has met the conditions of this particular grant assurance.

The question was asked about the specific amount of funding to Meadow Lake in Fiscal Year 2006. Miller advised that \$350,000 (95%) Federal was programmed to reimburse CDOT for the land loan. In addition, another \$100,000 (95%) Federal was programmed for the ALP Update. \$60,000 of additional State funds (80%) was granted to the airport to supplement the ALP Update project. Additionally, \$131,000 State funds for pavement maintenance was also granted to the airport. There was some confusion as to exact amounts of funding be expended for the ALP Update.

Vallin made a few general comments about funding. He stated that changes in the upcoming Federal AIP legislation will impact all airports. With more demand than dollars in the system, any reduction in funding will have impacts. That said, while we may not have the major FAA funding today, using State grants we can work to improve the airport in other ways such as funding surplus equipment and pavement maintenance.

The question was asked what is criteria for an airport to be considered a reliever? Is this criteria reviewed frequently and could the Meadow Lake Airport be in jeopardy of losing its funding? Bauer advised that there are three main criteria for reliever status - based aircraft, itinerant operations and relieving traffic from at least a small hub commercial service airport (Colorado Springs). He stated that the FAA reviews such status at least once a year. In theory, if a review was conducted and the based aircraft and itinerant numbers significantly decreased or Colorado Springs was no longer a small hub airport then, yes, there could be a potential that the current designation could change and funding would be jeopardized.

The question was asked, how are itinerant operations determined? Pomeroy explained that the activity counts are obtained during annual 5010 safety inspections. At uncontrolled fields such as Meadow Lake, the inspector visits with the FBO(s) where best estimates are discussed. At this time, CDOT has not found any reliable electronic equipment to assist in more accurate counts. Vallin mentioned that CDOT can also gauge operations based on fuel sales data that is monitored by Aeronautics.

The questions was asked, why is the FAA and CDOT reluctant to allow for the use displaced thresholds with the new runway? Bauer stated that one of the biggest objections of the FAA is that pilots at an uncontrolled field generally don't understand how to properly use the displaced pavements in aircraft operational calculations. Many safety factors are considered when the FAA determines displacement of a threshold. From the FAA's viewpoint, this presents a safety concern. The FAA is very reluctant at placing displaced thresholds at uncontrolled airports and it has been the policy of the FAA not to do so. It has been tried at a few other uncontrolled airports and it has been very unsuccessful. If the FAA is going to build a new runway at Meadow Lake it will be built without displaced thresholds and the FAA is very firm on that position.

The questions was asked, what is the FAA and CDOT supportive of in terms of the ALP and future development (main runway/crosswind runway) at Meadow Lake? Vallin explained that the State and FAA have three major areas of emphasis at this point; pay off the loan, maintain the existing runway and construct a primary runway that meets standards. The FAA and State understand there are additional desires at the airport such as a crosswind runway and/or a parallel runway but, considering today's funding, these are the top three priorities of the FAA and the State over the next 20 years.

An additional question was asked, is there another method that could be used, such as a phased plan (phase 1,2 and 3), that considers all of the other development depicted on the ALP? Vallin answered this was possible to do. He wanted to remind the audience that this was a plan based today's scenarios at Meadow Lake. The FAA and CDOT like to see an ALP updated every 5 years. As things change, these updated plans can incorporate changes – today's document is not a one time shot. In terms of working with El Paso County regarding land use issues, it was recommended by CDOT that Meadow Lake submit the most encompassing plan(s) to the County to provide for the most comprehensive protection of the airport from a County land use perspective. While this is a planning document meant to address long term planning needs of the airport, Bauer advised that not all projects identified on any ALP are supported by the FAA. The public perception aspect of showing all projects is a concern. He stated that the FAA is considering changing their process whereby projects would be identified as "supported by the FAA" or "not supported by FAA" over the course of the 20 year planning period. This methodology may be utilized during the approval of the Meadow Lake ALP.

The question was asked about funding for a parallel runway. Specifically, the MLAA Board has stated that CDOT will fund a parallel while in past meetings CDOT has said it will not fund a parallel. Why is there so much confusion? Vallin responded to the question. He stated that in a discussion with the MLAA board about the primary runway, the issue came up as to how to keep the airport alive if the only runway at the airport would have to be shut down for construction for 60-90 days. Vallin stated that his comment to the MLAA Board at the time was that if it gets to that point, the State would entertain the idea of providing a piece of pavement that would keep the airport operational. When asked about specific pavements by the Board, Vallin stated if it made sense then it would be considered. Vallin believes this is where the confusion began about the State immediately funding a parallel runway. Right now, the commitment of the FAA and CDOT is to work with Meadow Lake to keep a piece of pavement open. That might mean a new piece of pavement or it might mean phasing of the new primary runway project. Bauer advised that phasing of the new runway in such a manner to accommodate most aircraft is preferred by the FAA. Once again, the emphasis is the primary runway. Vallin stated that if it gets to the point where a new piece of pavement needs to be considered by CDOT, CDOT will be back down at the airport to discuss with the MLAA Board and the airport users exactly what this project will look like. Vallin stated he did not think we were there yet.

A comment was made regarding the arbitrary nature of the current planning work. In his opinion it has been very difficult to know what the FAA and CDOT would support in terms of projects and what we would not. He stated that once this ALP was complete and approved by the FAA and CDOT it would be helpful to continually know where things stand as we work to complete projects as funding allows. Pomeroy responded that it was the intent of both the FAA and CDOT to visit the airport on a biannual/annual basis, which ever seems best, to establish a good line of communication so such information could be regularly shared with the MLAA Board and airport users. Vallin stated that staying in contact with the FAA and CDOT would be of great benefit to MLAA as the airport grows. Both offices can offer good perspectives on where Meadow Lake stands in terms of projects like an Air Traffic Control Tower. The FAA and CDOT do not currently anticipate Meadow Lake being able to afford or compete for funding for a tower in the near future. Again, MLAA should anticipate future development in terms of a primary runway, taxiway etc... Vallin again stated that the process moves slow and everyone needs to understand that. Pomeroy again reiterated that the uncertain future of AIP might have dramatic impacts on not

only Meadow Lake but all the other airports in Colorado as well. Vallin mentioned the FAA's current proposal for user fees to fund the Aviation Fund in the next AIP reauthorization in 2008. When asked by an audience member, Vallin stated that Aeronautics was strongly opposed to the use of user fees.

The question was asked, how does the awkward layout – basically the airport as an airpark with mostly through-the-fence-access affect funding? Bauer and Vallin responded that this configuration definitely presents some unique challenges and situations...

The question was asked, what could be done to increase the level of confidence of the FAA and CDOT in terms of the sponsorship of the airport? Vallin responded the FAA and CDOT typically deal with city councils, county commissioners etc... where we have a continual contact. With the current MLAA Board structure where board members can change on a yearly basis, maybe staggered terms of the MLAA Board might offer more consistency. Vallin expressed further concern that the FAA and CDOT could get direction from one board one year only to have that change the next year. While that has not happened yet it is still a concern. From the FAA perspective, Bauer explained the contractual obligations associated with grant assurances between the sponsor and Federal government when an airport receives AIP funding. If the airport sponsor cannot meet the assurances, there is a possibility the FAA could ask for its money back. Concerning the land, the FAA feels comfortable with its investment because the land values would allow for the FAA to get its money back. However, when talking about construction projects, the value of these projects depreciate immediately. The FAA is concerned with what is in place to protect its investments with these types of projects. With the MLAA Board as the sole sponsor, it is a very complicated situation in terms of backing the assurances. The FAA would like to see some type of financial backing that supports these grants using such things as land purchased by the association etc... Again, the goal is to be able to recapture the FAA investment. Bauer also expressed support of the staggered terms as he feels it would provide consistency during planning cycles.

Vallin made the point that as Meadow Lake grows, it is very important that the MLAA works to get fair market value for leases at the airport. The goal is for the airport to raise income to bring dollars to the table when big Federal dollars come for projects such as the new runway. Vallin remarked it should be run like a business. Bauer also added the FAA will want to see new lease agreements that will be associated with the new land purchased by the State and the FAA to ensure the leases are for aeronautical purposes with fair market values. Bauer stressed the fact that uses on the new land need to be identified as aeronautical use only. The exception would be a Federal land release process but such releases are not common from the FAA anymore.

The question was asked, if the MLAA wanted to construct a new ramp area and new terminal, does the Federal government have a different grant program for such projects? Pomeroy answered, no, there is not different grant program for such projects. Funding for such projects would come from the AIP State Apportionment pot as well as the Non-Primary Entitlement Program.

The question was asked, is it a problem that Meadow Lake Airport does not currently have any aviation easements in place that are associated with current activity? Pomeroy and Vallin highly recommend both aviation easements and disclosure documents be considered by MLAA. This process will need to be coordinated through El Paso County.

The question was asked, what will it take to get an AWOS at Meadow Lake Airport? T.K. Gwin from the CDOT advised that CDOT was currently installing AWOS III P/T units around the state. The cost for new equipment and installation is around \$125,000 with annual maintenance/certification costs of \$5000-\$6000/year. The State could assist with the purchase and installation of the unit. The annual maintenance and certification cost would be the responsibility of the airport. To be considered, the project would have to be placed in the CIP and prioritized with other statewide projects. MLAA should work with Pomeroy if interested.

The question was asked, if MLAA uses its own funds to construct a crosswind, would the FAA and CDOT have anything to say about the standards to which it is constructed? Pomeroy answered, yes, the FAA and CDOT would like to see such a runway constructed to meet FAA design standards.

The question was asked, what is the viewpoint of the FAA and CDOT concerning Meadow Lake Airport becoming a State owned and run airport? Vallin responded that current state statute does not allow CDOT to own and operate airports. Vallin also said that this is something he would not support at this time. Vallin said legislative changes would first have to be made. If MLAA would like to continue the discussion, Vallin would talk with the Aeronautics Board and a White Paper would have to be written to determine the feasibility and repercussions of such an undertaking.

Pomeroy concluded the meeting reiterating the commitment of the FAA and CDOT to return for a similar meeting in six months.