

WSDOT Aviation Monthly Report April 2005

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1. WSDOT Aviation Presents Update to Community Airports Conference

WSDOT Manager of Aviation Operations, Stan Allison, traveled to Kennewick to present at the Community Airports Association (CAA) Spring Conference. Allison updated attendees on WSDOT's Local Airport Aid Grant Program, new Runway Safety Grant Program, and the two aviation legislative bills currently moving through Olympia. Conference participants were particularly pleased about WSDOT's grant program achievements during the 2003-2005 biennium, which include:



- Over 67% of WSDOT's budget going to smaller airports.
- WSDOT using only \$785,000 in state funds to leverage \$10 million in federal construction.
- WSDOT's policy requiring NPIAS airports to seek federal funding, which has translated to more funds (a total \$2,023,278, or 72% of all funds for the biennium) for the Non-NPIAS airports.

Attendees were also excited about WSDOT's partnership with the FAA on the new Runway Safety Grant Program. The conference was well attended by approximately 50 individuals representing 25 different airports.



2. What's a PCI Number?

As part of its ongoing effort to preserve and maintain airport pavements, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation has secured federal and state funding to evaluate airport pavements at 97 facilities. During March - June 2005, WSDOT Aviation will assess pavements using the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) procedure, which is the current industry standard for visually assessing pavements. Applied Pavement Technology (APTech),

with assistance from CH2M HILL and CivilTech, are undertaking this project, which is scheduled for completion by June 2006.

During a PCI evaluation, inspectors traverse the pavement and identify visible signs of deterioration. Pavement defects are characterized in terms of type of distress, severity level of distress, and amount of distress. This information is then used to develop a composite index PCI number that represents the overall condition of the pavement in numerical terms, ranging from 0 (failed) to 100 (excellent).

The PCI number measures the condition and level of maintenance or rehabilitation work that is required to repair pavements. The individual distress information provides insight into what may be causing the pavement to deteriorate, which in turn can be used to select the appropriate maintenance or rehabilitation action to correct the problem. PCI data also serves as the basis for the APMS, which is a computerized tool that is used to track pavement condition, identify pavement repair needs, and develop prioritized maintenance and rehabilitation programs with associated schedules and costs.

WSDOT and the FAA plan to use the analysis results to help prioritize state and federal grant projects at the system level to address priority needs. In addition, each airport included in the study will receive a report in Spring 2006 detailing the results of the pavement evaluation and recommendations for maintenance and rehabilitation at the individual airport level. WSDOT, the FAA and APTech will also conduct a series of Public Outreach meetings in Spring 2006 to communicate the findings of the study. These meetings will serve as a forum to discuss how each airport can use the results of this study to plan for the effective and timely maintenance and rehabilitation of their pavement infrastructure. A Pavement Management Handbook developed during this project will be distributed during these meetings and will serve as a valuable resource for the airports in the future.

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide the airports, the state, and the FAA with the information and analytical tools that can help them identify pavement-related needs, optimize the selection of projects and treatments over a multi-year period, and evaluate the long-term impacts of their project priorities. Further, it will provide the individual airports with the information they need to remain in compliance with Public Law 103-305 regarding pavement maintenance management.

WSDOT will also update its existing Airport Pavement Management System (APMS). Used appropriately, an APMS can provide the information necessary to make cost-effective decisions about the rehabilitation of the pavement network while understanding the long-term impacts of the decisions being made. It can also assist in conveying results to decision-makers that control budget allocations.

3. Shrinking FAA Funding Highlights National Aviation Conference

Airport operators from all over the country recently gathered at the Seattle Convention Center for the annual American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) trade show. Participants received some bad news from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding the aviation trust fund and its projected deficit by the year 2007 if major changes are not made. Created by Congress and funded primarily through airline ticket taxes, the aviation trust fund is intended to be used for airport improvements. With discount air carriers now offering cheaper fares, revenues from ticket taxes have declined. The President's proposed cuts to the aviation budget could result in as much as a 40% reduction in state apportionment funding. Earlier indication was the Congress would try to save the Non-Primary Entitlement Program, which guarantees funding for small airports. The FAA mentioned that balancing the budget may require some difficult decisions, such as further privatization of services and user fees. It is expected the budget will be appropriated by January 1, 2005 to allow airports to plan for changes resulting from funding reductions.

4. Tieton and Easton State Open for the Season

In early April, both Tieton State and Easton State airports both opened for the season. Tieton State was opened with help from the Drift Away Snowmobile Club from Yakima. Having adopted the airport, the club showed up with 20 members ready for some serious work. To replace old runway markers, the club manufactured and donated four new runway markers. Brush cutters were used to clear the runway marker areas and windsock locations. Volunteers inspected the runway and performed a general clean up of the entire area. Additionally, both windsocks were replaced and a new guest book was installed. Tieton State proved to be in great shape after the winter. The club will also hold a summer work party to install new aircraft tie downs and expand the aircraft camping area.



5. Off Road Vehicles Cause Commotion at Ranger Creek State Airport

Off road vehicles (ORVs) at Ranger Creek State Airport are posing a hazard to aircraft. This week State Airports Maintenance Supervisor, Jim Scott, met with the District Ranger and his staff from the USDA Snoqualmie Ranger District to discuss the unrestrained ORV operations at Ranger Creek. The ORVs have been allowed in the area for many years and the runway is now showing signs of damage from abuse. WSDOT has received many complaints from pilots about ORVs riding on the runway and not yielding to aircraft. Additionally, ORVs leave the runway covered with rocks and gravel creating a hazard to aircraft. WSDOT has discussed several solutions to fix this growing problem. Decisions will be made before summer on permanent fixes to protect the airport.

6. Runway Safety Education Seminars Continue to be a Great Success

Approximately 30 pilots gathered at a potluck luncheon at the Tacoma Narrows Airport on Saturday, April 16 to hear WSDOT's Stan Allison and FAA Runway Safety Officer, Brian Durham, discuss how general aviation pilots can help reduce the number of runway incursions. This was the fifth WSDOT and FAA pilot education seminar, bringing the total number of airports participating to 12. The total number of pilots participating is currently 116. Participants were extremely appreciative that representatives from both WSDOT Aviation and the FAA were on hand to answer questions and present information. The visit also gave Allison an opportunity to inspect security improvements that were funded through WSDOT's Local Airport Aid Grant Program.