CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The preparation of this document may have been supported, in part, through the Airport Improvement Program financial assistance from the Federal Aviation Administration as provided under Title 49, United States Code, section 47104. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the FAA. Acceptance of this report by the FAA does not in any way constitute a commitment on the part of the United States to participate in any development depicted therein nor does it indicate that the proposed development is environmentally acceptable with appropriate public laws.

Introduction

The Washington Department of Transportation - Aviation Division (hereafter referred to as WSDOT Aviation) is preparing an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP) Report and drawing set for Methow Valley State Airport (S52). The project is being conducted in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Seattle Airports District Office (ADO).

Funding for the ALP project is provided through an FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant (95%) with a local match (5%) provided by WSDOT. The AIP is a dedicated fund administered by FAA with the specific purpose of maintaining and improving the nation’s public use airports. The AIP is funded exclusively through fees paid by users of general aviation and commercial aviation.

The purpose of the ALP project is to define the current, short-term and long-term needs of the airport through a comprehensive evaluation of conditions and FAA airport planning and design standards. The ALP will provide specific guidance in making the improvements necessary to maintain a safe and efficient airport that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. The ALP Report will:

- Provide an updated assessment of existing facilities and activity;
- Forecast airport activity measures (based aircraft, aircraft operations, etc.) for the current 20-year planning period;
• Examine previous ALP recommendations as appropriate, to meet the current and projected airport facility needs, consistent with FAA airport design standards;
• Determine current and future facility requirements for both demand-driven development and conformance with FAA design standards;
• Update/prepare the airport layout plan, airspace plan, and land-use plan for the airport to reflect updated planning; and
• Develop an Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) that will prioritize improvements and estimate project development costs and funding eligibility for the 20-year planning period.

The most recent FAA-approved ALP for Methow Valley State Airport was completed in 1995.\(^1\) The 1995 ALP and a September 2006 aerial photograph flown for the project provide historic and current facility information to be integrated into the updated ALP.

**National Airport System**

Methow Valley State Airport is included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Participation in the NPIAS is limited to public use airports that meet specific FAA activity criteria. NPIAS airports are eligible for federal funding of improvements through FAA programs such as the current Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Currently, there are more than 3,300 NPIAS airports, of which more than 75 percent are general aviation airports similar to Methow Valley State. Three other communities in Okanogan County have airports included in the NPIAS (Omak, Brewster, and Oroville). Airports such as Twisp Municipal and Okanogan Legion Field are not included in the NPIAS and therefore, are not eligible to receive FAA funding.

The FAA has recognized NPIAS airports as being vital to serving the public needs of air transportation. In doing so, the FAA recognizes that access to the nation’s air transportation system is not limited to commercial air service. The FAA requires that all NPIAS airports periodically update their airport plans to maintain effective long-term planning. This project will enable WSDOT Aviation to meet the FAA’s requirement to maintain an up-to-date plan.

**State Airport System**

Methow Valley State Airport is identified as a public-use “General Aviation” airport in the Washington Aviation System Plan.

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Public Involvement

The public involvement element of the planning process will provide opportunities for all interested individuals, organizations, or groups to participate in the project. A planning advisory committee (PAC) has been formed for the project, which will provide a local review and input into the planning process. The PAC will review and comment on draft work products and provide local knowledge and expertise to the planning process.

At the beginning of the project, a kickoff meeting was held to provide information to interested citizens and allow the PAC, the Consultant, the FAA and WSDOT Aviation to meet and discuss key project issues. Additional PAC meetings will be held at key points during the study in conjunction with public informational meetings.

Summary of Preliminary Findings

1. Methow Valley State Airport is owned and operated by the Washington Department of Transportation - Aviation Division.

2. The Airport consists of approximately 65 acres, located approximately three miles southeast of Winthrop and four miles northwest of Twisp.

3. The Airport is included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport System (NPIAS), making it eligible for federal funding through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

4. The Airport has a “General Aviation” service level designation in the Washington State Aviation System Plan.

5. The Airport is home to the North Cascades Smoke Jumper Base, operated by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The USFS facilities are located on the east side of the runway, off of airport property. Aviation-related facilities include aircraft parking aprons, helicopter parking pads, and several operations buildings. The complex also includes a large undeveloped area that extends toward Twisp-Winthrop Eastside Road.

6. The Airport has one paved and lighted runway that is oriented in a northwest-southeast direction. The runway (13/31) is 5,049 feet by 75 feet with turnarounds located at both ends.

7. The airfield facilities are capable of accommodating single-engine and multi-engine aircraft weighing more than 12,500 pounds, generally consistent with aircraft included
FAA Airport Design Group II (ADG-II). ADG II aircraft have wingspans from 49 feet up to but less than 79 feet.

8. The pavement strength of Runway 13/31 listed in the published Airport/Facility Directory (A/FD) and FAA Airport Record Form (5010-1) is 30,000 pounds for aircraft equipped with single wheel landing gear configurations. This weight bearing capacity is consistent with pavement designs based on large aircraft (greater than 12,500 pounds).

9. Airfield lighting currently includes medium intensity runway edge lighting (MIRL), threshold lights, and a rotating beacon. Pilot directories indicate that both the runway lights and airport beacon are pilot-activated through the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) at 122.8 MHz.

10. The Airport operates under day and night visual flight rules (VFR) and does not currently have instrument approach capabilities.

11. The Airport has 24-hour weather observation capabilities with a privately owned Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS – 3).

12. Aviation fuel is not available for sale at the Airport. Privately-owned fuel storage facilities are located off the airport, but reportedly are not currently in use. The aircraft associated with the USFS operations provide their own fuel.

13. The Washington State Long Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) aviation activity forecast, prepared in 2007 estimated base year activity at 2,600 aircraft operations and 9 based aircraft (in 2005). The most recent air traffic data listed on the FAA Airport Record Form (5010-1) is for 2002: 7,650 operations and 9 based aircraft.

14. Public use landside facilities (aircraft parking apron) are located on the west side of Runway 13/31. Hangars are located both on and off airport property (east side of the runway). In mid-2008 there were a total of nine (9) hangars located at the airport. Additional buildings are located within the smoke jumper complex and other off airport properties that abut the airport on its east side.

**Summary of Recommendations**

To be added at conclusion of project.