

March 25, 2007

Barnard Dunkelberg & Company
Cherry Street Building
1616 East 15th Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120

Att'n: Peter Van Pelt

Re: Master Plan for Minden-Tahoe Airport

Gentlemen:

I am one of the citizen-representatives of Minden-Tahoe Airport Master Plan Working Group. On Wednesday, March 28, this group will meet for the third time to discuss your input concerning "Capacity Analysis and Facility Requirements." Unfortunately, I will be out of town that day and so I am herewith submitting my comments which I ask be made part of the record.

1. General Observation

This phase covers "Airfield Capacity Analysis" and "Facility Requirements." Your textual treatment of both items appear to be predicated upon reacting to demands for particular kinds of growth and analyzing the need to build accommodating facilities rather than directing the kind of future growth the community would like to attract, including building facilities to attract such usage. In that respect, you should note AC No. 150/5070-6B which on its first page states "the scope of each master plan must be tailored to the individual airport under evaluation." Note also Chapter 8 (p.47) which states as to the growth issue:

"In some cases, the airport sponsor may decide that it is in the community's best interest for the airport not to continue to grow to accommodate forecast activity, or to accommodate forecast activity only up to a point."

For example, an extension of runway length as to R16/34 to accommodate operational requirements of presumably heavier fire-fighting aircraft (thus opening the door to even heavier civilian aircraft) might not be something the community would like to see, nor may it be necessary. (C.23) Nor, would meeting future demand for large corporate hangers be necessarily countenance as opposed to one in favor of small aircraft hangers. (C.29) It should be noted, in that respect, that there is a continual need for T-hangers as shown by an ongoing waiting list whereas the 87 acres (not mentioned at all) now leased for the purpose of building corporate hangers remains on the drawing board and yet you project the need for more corporate hangers – the demand doesn't seem to be there.

Thus, while some parts of this report are on the mark, other parts seem to lack the vision that most in our community desire for the future of this airport. This will be of significance when the voters are asked in 2008 to do away with the present weight ordinance in favor of one that must give them some assurance that the airport will remain a small/sports aviation, community airport reflecting the rural character of our valley. That assurance should be reflected in this Master Plan.

2. Safety concern re lack of cross-wind runway during wave conditions.

C.6 sets forth a conclusion that “the existing dual runway configuration provides adequate combined wind coverage . . . for the (sic) all cross wind components. Therefore, no additional runways are required or justified *based on the standard FAA wind coverage criteria.*” On the other hand, C.9 recognizes that during wave conditions Runways 16/34 and 12/30 (8 month season) do not combine to meet the 95% coverage requirements at 10.5 knots. Thus there appears to be an apparent contradiction between the language set forth in C.6 and C.9. This contradiction could make the difference between AIP funding for an appropriate cross wind runway or no funding, except on a local basis. C.6 should be re-written to clear up this ambiguity. For the same reason, C.24 should delete the reference to the effect that additional runway facilities would require a local funding source since federal funding should be flexible enough to correct a safety hazard that exist 8 out of 12 months each year.

Based on the foregoing, your report should strongly advocate and not merely observe that there is a need for an adequate cross wind runway for glider/tow plane operations. It’s just not a matter of whether a compass rose wind analysis of critical runways meet or do not meet a desirable wind coverage of 95%. During wave conditions the lack of a suitable cross wind runway creates a palpable safety risk – and that’s the point. It should not take years to re-open R21 to do so.

3. The P-3 Orion should not be used as the “Design Aircraft” for R16/34 (C.3)

The P-3 is not based at KMEV and possibly may never land here again although it is exempted from the weight ordinance. My understanding is that it has 4 not 2 turbo-prop engines.

4. Taxiways (C.13 and C.24)

I’m informed that there is a safety issue as to Taxiway A as it crosses R30 during glider operations. There have been several near misses per my source. Also, can you certify that those taxiways used by aircraft over 30,000 lbs (single wheel) or 50,000 lbs (dual wheels) are of sufficient weight bearing capacity for heavier aircraft use at this time and, if so, up to what weight bearing.

5. Primary citizen concerns - the present “weight” ordinance and residential encroachment are not addressed. It doesn’t seem that airport planning and residential planning are in sync. Witness the building of church facilities under the departure path of R30. Also, last year a developer filed a development application for a large residential project under the departure path of R34. He has withdrawn it for now. Your report should reflect these concerns, raising the question of the need to co-ordinate such planning to assure the safety of airport operations lest the “new” population move politically to limit or shut down airport operations.

The current weight ordinance, while mentioned in several spots and recognized as an operational issue in the report, should be treated comprehensively under a new heading since it is the 800 pound gorilla in the room. To maintain AIP funding and to minimize its lawsuit potential, the voters have to be convinced to let it go in favor of a more comprehensive treatment of citizen concerns underlying that restriction. The ordinance has remained unenforced to date adding to citizens’ frustration and distrust concerning the airport’s future. Your report should address this issue more comprehensively.

6. The County Yard

The report, on C.26, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace, notes there are currently no known or identified FAR Part 77 obstructions on or in the vicinity of the airport. According to one source, the County Yard at the airport is too close to the runway and, besides being aviation unrelated, constitutes a safety hazard that might have contributed to a glider crash recently that caused one fatality and seriously injured another. While I make no judgment on the matter, the consultant should review this before a firm conclusion is drawn that there is or is not a Part 77 obstruction at the Airport.

7. East-side Development

The report hardly treats this important subject. It is mentioned as an issue for the next phase to consider but only in the context of developing alternatives. This seems to imply that there is now a primary plan for eastside development such that “alternative planning” can be developed. After all, the current subject of “Facility Requirements” is on the table for discussion now and yet nothing has been put forward on this subject in the current report.

This concludes my input on what I consider important to bring forward at this session of the AMPWG. Thank you for considering it.

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