

APPENDIX A

Farmville Airport Access and Land Use Study Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

August 2008

INTRODUCTION

To better understand local challenges, opportunities, issues and ideas for the Farmville Airport Access and Land Use Study, eleven key stakeholders were interviewed over the period of December 2007 and January 2008 by members of the consultant team. The eleven persons reached for these interviews represented different sectors of the surrounding communities including businesses, institutions, and government staff and officials. The following institutions and businesses were represented:

Airport Management Staff (Fix Based Operators)

Fork Union Military Academy (President)

Airplane operators

Cumberland County (Staff)

Town of Farmville (Mayor and Town Manager)

Longwood University (President)

Hampden-Sydney College (President)

Local businesses:

Bailey's cigarettes (S&M Brand)

Green Front Furniture

Kyanite Mining.

Brookleigh Country Club

The standard interview questions used are listed below. It should be noted however, that the interviewees were not constrained by the questions and many additional topics were discussed in the interviews, according to the interests of the person.

- Tell me a bit about your organization and its plans for the future, whether or not they are directly related to the airport.
- What is your connection, or relationship, to the airport?
- What future do you envision for the airport, its role in the community?
- What are the future challenges or opportunities associated with the airport?
- What are the most important issues or obstacles to overcome (access, land use, zoning, other) to realize your future wishes for the airport?
- What are the best ways to tackle these issues and realize these opportunities?
- Who else needs to be involved, is knowledgeable, or needs to be consulted?

The information from the interviews has been kept anonymous, and is grouped by theme in the body of this report.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. The airport is a very important asset to the community, and it will grow concurrently with the region and the needs of its patrons.
2. Improved, ongoing inter-jurisdictional cooperation is essential to success. Different mechanisms for cooperation, from citizen advisory groups to an airport authority, were suggested as possibilities to explore.
3. Local officials must find equitable ways to share costs as well as benefits of airport growth through strategies such as financial agreements, land use plans, and taxation policies.
4. Water and sewer extension, infrastructure, and land acquisition issues must be addressed in order to allow airport growth and expansion to occur. The Town's master plan calls for an extension of the runway, new parking, and new hangars. The potential impacts for improved access and water/sewer to attract growth, especially to Cumberland County's designated growth area along Route 45, should be considered.
5. Way finding signage is needed along the roads leading to the airport, especially for night-time and non-local drivers
6. Roadway capacity improvements on routes to the airport should be considered, although opinions are divided on how much, if any, improvements are needed.
7. The quality of the airport is rated highly by the businesses and institutions that use it. Local public awareness of the benefits and existing usage of the airport could be improved.

More specific findings of the interviews are grouped by generalized theme in the remainder of this report.

GENERALIZED INTERVIEW COMMENTS BY THEME

Vision for Airport Growth

- The airport is *"a front door to the community so it's important that it grows and grows well"*.
- The airport is being expanded and could even grow more in the future. It is a very important central location because it is largely a rural area strategically located in the center of the state, with Farmville as the commercial hub.
- Having this airport near Farmville is important for both the town and region. The airport should grow and improve concurrent with growth and change among the communities, institutions, businesses, and people who use it.
- Careful attention should be paid to maintenance and cooperative management as the airport grows.
- Currently the airport is a valuable resource for local business-related and private travel. Commercial passenger services could be part of the airport's future.

Airport Operations

- The Fixed Based Operators manage the airport for the Town of Farmville, and employ six people. They also operate the Hanover county airport facility, which employs about 25 persons. The Hanover facility is much larger, which means the management staff has experience that will be helpful as the Farmville airport grows.
- Visitors and airport users are consistently pleased with operations, appearance, upkeep, reputation, and maintenance of the airport. People enjoy using it.

Surrounding Land Use Issues

- The airport facility is owned by the Town of Farmville, but Cumberland County has jurisdiction over zoning and taxation of the land in the airport area. The airport dates to 1960's and has been in operation nearly 45 years. It predates the first zoning ordinance of Cumberland County in 1969. Its presence was "grandfathered" in when the surrounding lands were designated primarily

as A2 (Agricultural) land uses. However, any expansion related to the airport would require rezoning to heavy or light industrial (M1 or M2) uses and/or a Conditional Use Permit for airport uses.

- One of Cumberland County's growth areas extends two miles north of Farmville along Route 45, and may well need to be expanded. The land around the airport is still generally in large tracts owned by a few landowners, but could certainly change status in the coming years.
- Cumberland County adopted an Airport Safety Overlay District zone in 1996. Its purpose is to restrict buildings or landscaping that in any way interfere with the landing, takeoff, or maneuvering of aircraft, including lighting, height restrictions, communications interference, etc.
- Brookleigh County Club, adjacent to the airport, is concerned about the airport expansion encroaching on golf course property as well as possible drainage into the golf course from any airport expansion. With an anticipated increase in larger sized aircraft and closer proximity, there is also a concern about the liability of the golf course with the possibility of golf balls hitting multi-million dollar aircraft.

Airport Patrons and Customers

- The airport is growing and expanding. There seems to be a natural market demand for continued growth. When the current management Fixed Based Operators (FBO) took over a few years ago, the hangars typically housed 10-13 private planes. Now it routinely houses 20-30 planes. The FBO now has a 135 certificate, which means they have capacity to operate charter flights. This creates a major opportunity for expansion in new markets.
- Many businesses in the area use the airport. The region is continuing to attract new business, therefore demand for services and airport growth is likely. A list of key airport users was generously provided by Airport management and this is included in an appendix below. More details about some of the individual businesses or institutions are provided in subsequent paragraphs.
- Fork Union Military Academy (FUMA) is a private school that has been in operation for 110 years. FUMA Air Llc., a private company independent from the Military Academy, owns an airplane and hangar. This company largely provides services to Fork Union Military Academy executives, management, staff, trustees, and donors.
- Longwood University is the fifth most selective of Virginia's fourteen public institutions of higher education. It offers strong liberal arts curricula with heavy emphasis on applied professional experience and is proud of its 96% post graduation job placement rate. A master planning process is currently underway with an emphasis on carefully controlled expansion; it calls for roughly 3% annual enrollment increases through 2020. Steady, continuous growth is their strategy. Longwood is challenged by not being on a major interstate so it sees the airport as an important transportation asset. The University uses the airport for their Division 1 NCAA athletic teams, donors, visiting alumni, legislators, trustees, and senior management. The general population of students who travel by air usually fly out of Richmond, Charlottesville, or Dulles, as do other University-related travelers. The University spends about \$1.5 million per year on air travel, part of which is for driver fees to and from other airports. More charter services from Farmville would be welcomed by the University.
- Bailey's cigarettes, S&M Brand tobacco company, has two corporate aircraft and a hangar at the Farmville Airport. They use their aircraft frequently, mostly for corporate guests and its executives.
- Hampden-Sydney College has been a traditional, private liberal arts institution since 1775, and currently has 1,100 students, 300 employees and 8,000 alumni. They have a \$50 million dollar per year operation on a 1,250 acre campus. Some students, parents, donors, trustees, and staff use the airport, but it could be more used than it currently is. Some students own planes, but not many. Parents and trustees come and go using their own aircraft. They have an alumnus who

has an airplane housed in Newport News who regularly lets the College use it depending on availability. They call and board it in Farmville.

- Green Front Furniture is a furniture company comprised of 15 warehouses, buildings, and stores and approximately 760,000 sq ft of retail space in addition to the warehouses. Around 95% of their sales are from clientele that travel 50 or more miles to reach them, so it is a significant commercial destination. Many customers use the airport as a means of getting in and out quickly. Green Front used to have a plane out there at one time, but no longer. They do keep a car there for customers who fly into the airport, which is used about once every 7-10 days. The airport certainly helps their business. Its presence is not key to its success, but it certainly is an asset, not just to Green Front but to many in the community. The area has grown more in last 10 years than the last 40 years. There is a new Lowe's coming in, and its corporate staff will use the airport.
- The Kyanite Mining Company, located 10 miles from the airport in Buckingham County, is a mining company that employs 150 people. They have kept airplanes at the airport for 40 years and also own a lot of land adjacent to the facility.
- The Farmville management has done a good job of bringing new businesses into the region. Farmville is the center point for commerce in the surrounding five or six counties. All counties will need this airport, it is very centrally located.
- New developments in the region, such as the Manor, a new age restricted community, and the 18 hole destination golf course outside Farmville mean there will be added demand for an improved regional airport facility nearby. Many retirees are wealthy and this could increase demands upon the airport for more charter or limited commercial service.
- Many airport patrons comment on "How nice the airport looks, how well it is taken care of. How the town does a good job with maintenance and grounds keeping." The airport grounds staff is committed to maintaining this high level of quality.
- Much of the general public is not aware of the how much the airport benefits the community. It would be helpful to raise awareness of how many businesses use the airport, and how its growth could enhance the quality of life for all local residents and businesses.

Challenges to Grow or Other Issues of Concern

- A large issue facing the airport is the lack of financial support from surrounding counties for the airport. Prince Edward County contributes some annual funding to the airport but otherwise the town carries the remainder of the burden. Cumberland County benefits from the tax base, but does not contribute directly to airport support. Buckingham County does not contribute to the airport, but also does not benefit as much as the other counties from its presence.
- A better marketing effort or strategy aimed toward potential local corporate and charter customers could help raise awareness and use of airport.
- Accessibility could be improved and better roads would help. Though the airport is just one mile from Farmville, it requires six miles of road to reach it.
- Adequate plowing can be an issue, as the airport can sometimes be the last place in the area to get snow removal. With increased future use of the airport it may need more commitment from localities to maintain access in all conditions.
- Signage and way finding is an important issue. Many people don't even know it is there. Signage is not great and roads can be circuitous and not very easy to find, especially if one is not familiar with the area. There is nothing outstanding that lets you know there is an airport there. It also can be particularly hard to find in the dark.
- Accessibility issues for the larger region are not necessarily a big concern. A few interviewees said it is easy to reach, the road conditions are generally good, but signage could be improved.

- Future congestion in Farmville may present a problem. This is not currently a concern but could become one as both the town and airport grown.
- Poor access to the airport is a challenge, especially because of the windy country roads and small signage. Entry to the airport could be spruced up a bit.
- Water and sanitary service is of key importance. The airport area is challenged by having largely non-percolating soils which makes local septic facilities a major challenge to future growth. The closest point of water/sewer line or facilities is in Farmville, and up portions of Route 45 which has public sewer to the town line. Some of the Kimberly Hills subdivision has sewer coverage, but not all lots. Currently, connections to the town are gravity fed, without a force main. Plank Road has some sewer. The Industrial Park nearby has water and sewer and is approximately two miles from the airport. Water and sewer service are important challenges to overcome if the airport is to expand and grow.
- More on water/sanitary infrastructure issues. The Town of Farmville will probably run water and sewer to the airport, but there are a number of options for this. They could come across the river and pump it back to the Farmville system, or it could be run up roads with force main. All of this costs money however. It would also have the impact of opening up a lot of land for other development.
- Farmville put a moratorium on water supply recently. One now needs to go to the Town Council to get connections approved.
- Cumberland and Prince Edward Counties and the Town of Farmville may have some internal issues with water and/or sewer, but usually seem able to resolve issues.
- One of the largest challenges is inter-jurisdictional cooperation. Ongoing dialog and cooperation are needed. Farmville, Cumberland and other interested localities need to come together and form a good operational relationship for the airport. There have been some courtesy tours but more cooperation will be needed.
- The way the Virginia state policies challenge towns, cities, and local governments to compete is not helpful. There should be better incentives for municipalities to cooperate especially on infrastructure and growth issues.
- Encroachment of non-compatible land uses is a large challenge facing small airports. Farmville is not yet facing this issue but should plan for it. Land acquisition will be necessary if the airport is to grow. Planning should discourage people from building residential development in or near the facility and this could be accomplished through zoning amendments or through direct land acquisition.
- The airport does not have a high profile even for some of the local population. Many people don't understand what businesses use it, or how the community benefits from its presence.
- Local property tax on hangars and airplanes based there is a concern for owners and operators. If local taxes increase too much, owners and operators may well choose another airport to base their operations out of. A recent tax increase was appealed to the Cumberland Board of Supervisors and they responded favorably by reducing the rate, but it remains a concern for owners and aircraft operators.

Strategies to Address Challenges

- Improve the airport's maintenance facilities, capabilities, and overall reputation so that it is recognized regionally for a high level of maintenance excellence. Airplanes don't depreciate if they are well maintained. Plane owners and operators everywhere know this and need good maintenance shops. They will make special trips to places for the sole purpose of having their planes serviced or hangared there.
- Ensure that the airport does not become land locked. Airports such as the facility in Hanover County are larger but are now challenged by space around them being used for other purposes

which impacts their future growth and expansion opportunities. Farmville does not have this issue yet but well could and needs to think about adjacent land uses when planning for the future, not just for this 2005 master plan but for beyond. There is a lot of undeveloped land adjacent to the airport which presents the opportunity for land acquisition or airport compatible development and services to occur.

- Specific improvements to airport (aviation related) could include:
 - o Upgrade systems for assisting with precision approach and landing. This improves safety especially during bad weather.
 - o Support was shown for Alternative 3 in the 2005 Master Plan that expands the runway, and adds a taxi way. This is the preferred option.
 - o The runway needs to be at least 5,500 ft long, for a precision approach and larger for jet aircraft. Sometimes they are limited by fuel capacity or wet runway more than size or length of the runway.
 - o Adding a cross runway would be a large improvement.
 - o Protect the runway from encroachment of animals. Deer on the runway is a large safety concern and pilots sometimes take a first pass at night to see if the approach is clear of animals prior to landing.
- Greater regional cooperation is necessary to allow the airport to grow with demand. No joint development authority exists for the airport. It is owned and managed by the town so jurisdictions have no say or authority in how it grows, nor do they share the same financial obligations. It would be wonderful to have a joint counties-town commission for airport, or some type of cooperative agreement, but that would involve sharing financial costs of upkeep and growth. Regardless, some form of permanent mechanism for bridging the gap between town and counties would be helpful, even an on-going citizen's advisory group, council or commission to jointly advocate for the airport's growth, and solve inter-jurisdictional issues of management, growth, and costs. Numerous interviewees mentioned that greater inter-jurisdictional cooperation mechanism would be beneficial.
- Improve signage, way finding, and gateway appearances.
- Specific access recommendations:
 - o One solution to address access would be to build a straight shot in from Route 15, with perhaps a bridge across the Appomattox River. This idea was floated at the Kick Off but some opposition was raised. The area in Buckingham County that is adjacent to the airport is not designated as a growth area, so putting new roads through that area may be challenged on those grounds. Many seemed to think simply improving the access from Route 45 is the most feasible because it is the closest.
 - o To improve access, build a straight road, from 460 BUS to the airport. The shortest line would be from the jail area along 460 to the airport.
 - o Most people visiting the furniture outlet or colleges use 460 west, to Shepherds Rd, then come back down south, which is just a longer route.
 - o Roads near the airport could be straightened out because some are curvy, but otherwise access is generally adequate.
 - o Someone (VDOT, Cumberland County?) needs to improve the roads accessing the airport, widen them, and cut trees and foliage back regularly.
 - o The State (VA) needs to put more markings, improve signage, and beautify gateway points to the airport.
- Amend the zoning near the airport to allow for expansion or growth. This would need close cooperation between Farmville and Cumberland.

- Funding sources may be available for public water and/or sewer service extensions to the airport. Cumberland County recently received grants from the Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Rural Development, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission to build a water treatment plant, storage tank, and water lines near their court house. Other grant opportunities would exist to help extend a force main to the airport, and the Commonwealth Regional Commission may be in a good position to assist with this fundraising effort, especially if this enhances the regions multi-modal options.
- Engage the services of a good outside facilitator; someone proficient in conflict resolution methods may be needed to work with the communities and institutions to create a larger vision and goals.
- Encourage the governing bodies to work together.

Others to Talk with or Involve

- Mike Cooper, Community and Economic Development, Cumberland County does work with industrial park.
- Ron Dowdy, a jet aircraft owner out of Orlando, Florida, has adjacent property north of airport.
- Fred Russell, of Russell Enterprises, owner of the McDonalds franchise in town has owned aircraft and uses the airport.

List of Users Provided by the Farmville Airport Management

The following information of airport users was provided to us by Kim Grimes, Airport Manager, Fix Based Operator, Farmville Regional Airport:

"Farmville Regional Airport is a beautiful, public use airport located centrally in the heart of Virginia. We have a great range of businesses and pilots that use our airport for many different reasons. The town of Farmville continues to grow in its industry, and so do the surrounding counties. Therefore, the airport continues to grow. As each aircraft arrives, we try to meet each need personally, because to these people, this is the "front door of our community." We try to keep a list of many of the companies and businesses that use our airport. However, some businesses arrive in smaller aircraft and we don't always let us know what company they are with. But this list is a large portion of the many companies and businesses that have flown in and continue to use the Farmville Regional Airport."

Institutions/Businesses: US Forestry Service; US Military - all branches; State Police, local police, etc.; Green Front Furniture; Southside Community Hospital; Hampden-Sydney College; Longwood University; Fork Union Military Academy; a Buckingham County Computer program Consultant; Kyanite Mining; Coca-Cola; JB Fuqua / Fuqua School; Jail (Prisoner pick-up); Davis Ambulance; Air Ambulance Services (Pegasus, etc.); Crop dusters (spraying for the Forestry Service and local farmers); Tyson Foods; Clayton Homes; Wal-Mart; Belk; Red Wing Shoes; CATO; Food Lion; S & M Brands - Bailey's Cigarettes; Construction Corporations for local jobs (road work, etc.); Buckingham Slate; Buckingham Aero (Moseley Flint School); Net Jets - private corporation charters to bring business trips to Farmville; Luck Stone; Taco Bell; Applebee's; Ruby Tuesday; Schewels Furniture; SunChase Apartments; Delta Consultants (consultants for the airport - they fly in every time they come to town); Lowe's; Caravan Charters; SATS Air; PHI Helicopters; The Manor - Golf Course; First Eclipse.

Political Dignitaries: Oliver North; George Allen; Jim Gilmore; Mark Warner; John Warner; Doug Wilder; Mary Sue Terry; Admiral William C. Owens, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Actors: Richard Gere (filming the movie Sommersby); Cindy Crawford (filming the movie Sommersby); Toby Keith; Ty Pennington (Extreme Home Makeover).

Nascar: Rusty Wallace; Bobby Hamilton.

There are also private pilots who fly in to the airport to eat at the local restaurants in town, visit family, attend funerals, attend local events, etc.