

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

WORK SESSION DATE: November 19, 2013

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Future Air Service Planning Study – Phase I

STAFF RESPONSIBLE: Jim Elwood, Aviation Director

ISSUE STATEMENT: At today’s work session, Jim Elwood and Joseph Pickering of Mead & Hunt, will present the findings of Phase I of the Future Air Service Planning Study and provide a recommendation regarding next steps. In addition, Sam Cherry of Bombardier, based in Montreal, will be speaking about the advancing technologies of aircraft design. Bombardier is the designer and manufacturer of the two aircraft currently capable of operating at ASE (the Q400 Turboprop and the Canadair Regional Jet 700).

BACKGROUND:

ASE continues to work with community partners in securing strategic air service options for the community. Pitkin County, along with its partners, must be attentive to the changing air carrier environment. Overall industry trends that are being experienced include a shortage of applicable aircraft, fewer airlines, changing regional jet specifications, intense competition for air service, significant airline investments and airlines requesting risk sharing with communities. Given this fluid and dynamic environment, the Board directed staff to develop a study that will provide further insight into key areas including industry trends, ASE’s air service market and options, and airfield/airspace configuration. Staff has discussed steps necessary to evaluate future air service given the anticipated changes in the industry, specifically with regard to aircraft fleet mix and performance and it’s affect on the overall geometry of the airport, both existing and future.

This study addresses the following questions:

- What is the changing technology of future aircraft serving ASE?
- What can ASE do to best sustain future air service?
- How would ASE accommodate these operations?
- What are the impacts and benefits to the airport and community?
- What is best for the future health of the community?

To answer these questions, a phased approach to the study was previously approved by the Board:

Phase I

- Evaluation of current and future regional jets and their ability to operate at ASE
- Consideration of future fleet mix and impacts air service development at ASE
- Presentation to the Board, decision point to scope and continue onto Phase II

Phase II – Potential Scope Depending on Phase I Outcomes/Direction

- Review of regulatory environment
- Analysis of airfield and airspace configuration
- Identification and evaluation of preliminary environmental considerations
- Feasibility analysis of different options to ensure future commercial air service to ASE (including likelihood of community support, cost, compliance with FAA regulations, etc)
- Presentation to Board, decision point to scope and continue onto Phase III

Phase III – Potential Scope Depending on Phase II Outcome/Direction

- Gathering of community input regarding options identified in Phase II
- Prioritization of options for Board consideration
- Final recommendations
- Board consideration and final direction

The study progresses in a sequentially phased approach that allows the Board to begin the next phase, following the completion of the prior phase, or discontinue the study based on the findings.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Core Focus/Flourishing Natural and Built Environment: Gaining knowledge about the future aircraft fleet mix and advancing aviation technologies will greatly enhance the Board’s decision-making regarding the Airport and its role as a economic asset for our community.

Core Focus/Prosperous Economy: The Airport also provides a key link to the economic health of the Roaring Fork Valley, surrounding communities, and the region. Positioning the Airport to attract competitive air service is a key component to providing a sustainable economic base for our community.

KEY DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Does the Board see benefits to the enhanced technology and environmental improvements of these future aircraft? Are they aligned with community values?
2. The Board has typically explored air service issues in a shorter timeframe (3 years or less). Understanding the potential changes to the future fleet mix is a forward-thinking strategic approach to ensure that air service remains viable for the community well into the future. As seen with Phase I and with past efforts, it may take an extensive period of time (5 to 10 years) to experience both fleet changes and secure any necessary grant funding for future airfield improvements. Does the Board support continued study as described above?
3. Is there other information that the Board would like to be included if Phase II of the study is authorized?

BUDGETARY IMPACT: None at this time. If the Board proceeds to Phase II, a budget request will be brought back to the Board for approval.

RECOMMENDED BOCC ACTION: Given the advent of changing aircraft design and technology, the impacts on future air service and fleet mix, and to explore future options available to the Board, staff recommends that Phase II of the study be completed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Power Point Presentation
2. Future Air Service Planning Study