

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Project Overview

The City of Kelso in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is updating the airport master plan for the Southwest Washington Regional Airport (FAA airport identifier – KLS) to address the airport’s needs for the next twenty years. The airport master plan will provide specific guidance in making the improvements necessary to maintain a safe and efficient airport that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.



Study Purpose

The purpose of the Southwest Washington Regional Airport - Airport Master Plan is to define the current, short-term, and long-term needs of the airport through a comprehensive evaluation of facilities, existing facilities and site conditions, and current FAA airport planning and design standards. The study will also address elements of local planning (land use, transportation, environmental, economic development, etc.) that have the potential to affect the planning, development, and operation of the airport. This project updates the 2011 airport master plan.¹ Since the last master plan was completed, the FAA has identified several areas of emphasis for airports that affect airport planning, including land use compatibility in runway protection zones (RPZ) and airfield design standards compliance. An Airport Geographic Information System (AGIS) survey and a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) are also being completed in conjunction with the airport master plan. The data from these projects will be incorporated into the airport master plan.

¹Master Plan – Southwest Washington Regional Airport (Final Report, February 2011; URS Corporation)

Project Need

KLS is included in the federal airport system—the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Inclusion in the NPIAS is limited to public use airports that meet specific FAA activity thresholds. The FAA requires all NPIAS airports to maintain current planning, with periodic updates of their master plans and airport layout plans (ALP). These updates maintain current planning consistent with applicable FAA technical standards, policies, regulations that change over time, and maintain overall funding eligibility with the FAA.

There are currently 3,332 existing NPIAS facilities including airports, heliports, and seaplane bases.² The FAA recognizes that NPIAS airports are vital to serving the air transportation needs of the public and that access to the nation’s air transportation system is not limited to commercial service airports. The majority of NPIAS airports are designated “Primary” or “Non-primary.” The 382 Primary airports provide the majority of commercial air service within the system. The 2,950 Non-primary airports include General Aviation, Reliever, and Non-primary Commercial Service airports (airports that enplane 2,500 to 9,999 annual passengers). KLS is designated as a Non-primary General Aviation airport.

NPIAS airports are eligible for federal funding of eligible improvements through FAA programs such as the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The AIP is a dedicated fund administered by the FAA with the specific purpose of maintaining and improving the nation’s public use airports. The AIP is funded exclusively through general aviation and commercial aviation user fees and the funds can only be used for AIP eligible projects.

Project Funding

Funding for the airport master plan is provided through an FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant (90%) with a local match (10%) provided by the airport sponsor.

Airport Ownership

The City of Kelso is the owner (Sponsor) of the Southwest Washington Regional Airport (KLS). An Airport Operating Board representing the City of Kelso, City of Longview, Cowlitz County, and Port of Longview oversees all operational aspects of the airport through an inter-local agreement between all four entities. Through the inter-local agreement, the airport operates as a stand-alone entity. However, the City of Kelso as the airport owner (sponsor) of record, is responsible for conforming to all applicable FAA regulations, design standards, and grant assurances. A full-time Airport Manager is staffed through the City of Kelso to oversee all airport operations. The Airport Manager is responsible for coordinating with the airport operating board on all airport related business.

² 2017-2021 NPIAS Report

History of the Airport and Development

A review of previous airport master plans, WSDOT pavement management plans, and FAA grant history was conducted to provide a summary of significant historical airport developments.

- 1930s The airport started as a dairy farm and consisted of a grass landing strip;
- 1950s The runway was first paved;
- 1975 Apron paving (northwest section);
- 1977 Property acquisition (north parcels) from 1977-1987;
- 1983 The runway was reconstructed and realigned, the parallel taxiway and main apron south of the FBO was constructed, and the fuel apron (PCC) was constructed. Talley Way was realigned in preparation for a future Runway 30 extension;
- 1989 Apron pavement received a thin overlay (northwest section);
- 1994 Install airfield signs, fencing;
- 1995 The tiedown apron north of the FBO was constructed;
- 1997 The runway was crack filled;
- 2002 The runway and parallel taxiway were slurry sealed and the main apron received a thin overlay, aircraft wash pad constructed, rotating beacon installed;
- 2007 The southeast three T-hangar taxilanes were constructed, NAVAID relocated, fencing;
- 2016 New airport beacon installed;
- 2016 The runway was crack filled; two T-hangars and three conventional hangars were removed west of the runway to eliminate FAR Part 77 airspace penetrations; and the south section of the west hangar taxilane was removed;
- 2017 Runway crack sealing continued; and
- 2019 Runway rehabilitation (seal coat, repaint NPI markings).

Study Organization

Work in progress on the airport master plan was documented in a series of technical memoranda (presented as draft chapters). These chapters were prepared to document progress in the study, facilitate the review of preliminary results, and obtain input throughout the master planning process. The draft chapters were updated and incorporated into the draft airport master plan technical report at the study's conclusion.

The draft chapters and supporting documents were prepared over a period of approximately 18 months. Each draft chapter was reviewed locally and by the FAA and Washington State Department of Transportation – Aviation Division (WSDOT) for consistency with federal and state regulations, policies, and standards.

The 2017-2037, Southwest Washington Regional Airport -Airport Master Plan includes the following chapters:

- *Chapter 1 – Introduction and Project Overview*
- *Chapter 2 –Inventory of Existing Conditions*
- *Chapter 3 – Aviation Activity Forecasts*
- *Chapter 4 – Airport Facility Requirements*
- *Chapter 5– Airport Development Alternatives*
- *Chapter 6 – Airport Layout Drawings*
- *Chapter 7 – Airport Land Use Compatibility*
- *Chapter 8 – Airport Financial Plan*
- *Chapter 9 –Recycling and Solid Waste Management Plan*
- *Appendix – Environmental Technical Memorandum*

Local Citizen Participation

At the outset of the study, the City of Kelso made a commitment to an inclusive, transparent master planning process and made all project work products available for public review. The public involvement element of the airport master plan provided several ways for interested individuals, organizations, and groups to participate in the project:

- All draft work products were available for public review and comment. Links to the documents were posted on the project webpage to allow for convenient access, review, and comment;
- A series of public meetings were held during the project to facilitate public participation including;
 - A local planning advisory committee (PAC) was formed by the City of Kelso to assist the project team in reviewing draft technical working papers and to provide input into the planning process. The composition of the PAC provided an effective blend of community members and airport users. Representatives from the FAA Seattle Airports District Office and WSDOT served as ex officio members of the PAC. The PAC met periodically during the project, provided review and comment on draft work products, discussed key project issues, and provided local knowledge and expertise to the planning process. All PAC meetings were open to the public.
 - Periodic study sessions and briefings with City staff, project meetings, and open houses were conducted, as required.

Summary

The FAA-defined airport master planning process requires a sequential, systematic approach, which leads to the selection of a preferred airport development option. The preferred development option is then integrated into the ALP and Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP). To meet this goal, the airport master plan includes the following elements/tasks:

- *Provide an updated assessment of existing facilities and activity;*
- *Forecast airport activity measures (design aircraft, based aircraft, aircraft operations, etc.) for the current 20-year planning period;*
- *Examine previous planning recommendations (2011 Airport Master Plan) based on ability to meet current FAA airport design standards and policies;*
- *Determine current and future facility requirements for both demand-driven development and conformance with FAA design standards;*
- *Evaluate airside and landside facility improvement options in the form of development alternatives;*
- *Provide consistency between airport planning and land use planning/zoning to promote maximum compatibility between the airport and surrounding areas;*
- *Prepare an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP) drawing set to accurately reflect current conditions and master plan facility recommendations; and*
- *Develop an Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) that prioritizes improvements and estimates project development costs and funding eligibility for the 20-year planning period.*



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.

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