

The background features a dark blue gradient with faint, light-colored technical diagrams. A prominent circular scale with numerical markings (160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260) is visible on the left side. Other diagrams include concentric circles, dashed lines, and arrows, suggesting a technical or engineering context.

# ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AJ EISENBERG AIRPORT (KOKH)

PORT OF COUPEVILLE PRESENTATION  
TO THE OAK HARBOR CITY COUNCIL  
APRIL 4, 2023

# WHY IS THE PORT OF COUPEVILLE INTERESTED IN THE AIRPORT?

- Port Districts were created to promote commerce and economic sustainability. The Port of Coupeville, in fact, was created specifically to own and operate an airport
- Airports create direct, induced, and indirect economic activity, enhance and complement current economic drivers (e.g. tourism) and bring economic opportunities to rural areas that would not otherwise be available.
- Airports bring communities other benefits such as transportation resiliency and emergency services

# HOW DOES AN AIRPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY?

- Direct jobs/businesses (passenger transport, cargo service, aircraft maintenance, aircraft rental, flight training, fuel, Embry Riddle, commercial air service, other airport businesses, etc.)
- Construction and maintenance funding from State and FAA, creating local jobs
- Transient aircraft bring tourists, purchase fuel, meals, lodging, etc.

# HOW DOES AN AIRPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY?

- Creates community income by businesses and individuals that use commercial and GA to facilitate operations
  - specialty cargo mobility/ overnight package service
  - link to the national and international air transportation network
- Increases community tax revenue

With access to aviation, community residents and businesses have the advantage of being able to easily compete in the global economy.

*In study after study, airports' positive economic impacts far outweigh any local public funding an airport may receive.*

# TRANSPORTATION RESILIENCE

-We are an island community that does not have good access to aviation infrastructure

Automobile travel times from Coupeville to nearby full-service aviation facilities:

- Anacortes: 58 min
  - Skagit Regional: 1 hr 11 min
  - Paine Field: 1 hr 52 min
  - SeaTac International: 2 hrs 25 min
- We rely on ferries and a two-lane bridge and are vulnerable to transportation system interruptions
- Expansion of vehicular transportation infrastructure is in conflict with community desires to maintain rural character
- eVTOL (electric Vertical Take Off and Landing) aircraft are expected to be a significant part of regional transportation plans in coming years.

# ENHANCED EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Medical Transport
- Search and Rescue
- Fire Fighting
- Fugitive Tracking
- Disaster Relief and Evacuation



# ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF LOCAL AIRPORTS

SOURCE: WDOT, AVIATION DIVISION\*

	Jobs	Labor Earnings	Economic Activity
Skagit Regional	178.5	\$3,274,429	\$11,668,958
Anacortes	113.5	\$2,018,731	\$7,320,287
Lopez Island	121.5	\$2,206,580	\$7,591,268
Friday Harbor	164	4,100,000	15,100,000
Orcas / Eastsound	39	1,243,000	3,600,000

Total Impact = Direct Impacts + Indirect Impacts + Induced Impacts

\*based FAA and US Department of Commerce models 2012 WSDOT studies

# KOKH OPERATIONAL STATISTICS (SOURCE: FAA – 3/27/23)

- Aircraft based on the field: **24**
  - Aircraft operations: **18, 152 /yr** - averages nearly 50 per day
  - 36% transient general aviation
  - 60% local general aviation
  - 4% air taxi/commercial

## **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

- Airport is viable and active NOW
- Based Aircraft = >\$100k/year in hangar rental
- Transient traffic purchase fuel (\$100k in revenue), bring tourists
- Commercial flights have to potential to greatly increase with improved facilities (has been 20% of operations in the past)



# PORT OF COUPVILLE'S APPROACH

## Transitional Phase

- Acquire Airport
- Address minor deferred maintenance,
- Operate airport under current economic model
- Complete multi-year strategic and master planning for potential future development (what is wanted and needed, what has most benefit, what is feasible). Planning will include capture strategies for State and Federal funding

## Future Phase

- To be determined by Strategic Planning Process (e.g. Larger Runway, More Hangars, Terminal, Business Park, etc.)

\*Even if Strategic Planning indicates future development will not pay off, Airport property still has intrinsic value as is, therefore acquisition presents little risk. If operations are closed down, property would still have value and represent little to no taxpayer cost.

# CURRENT STATUS

- Financial viability of the current operation HAS been evaluated
  - Revenue from hangar rental + fuel sales is over \$200,000/year
  - Operating expenses – including payment for management services - are covered by revenue with some reserve.
- A plan HAS been developed regarding required deferred maintenance
  - ~\$100,000 of required maintenance projects have been identified
- A plan HAS been developed to operate the airport in its current state
  - This plan identifies all airport jobs, responsibilities, and required activities for operations and indicates exactly how each will be done under Port ownership (including assignment of specific individuals to specific roles)
- The Transitional Plan Includes developing a Strategic Plan and Master Plan
  - These plans will make sure any FUTURE investments and improvements to the property make sense, indicate how much those improvements will cost, and how the improvements will be made (including funding sources).
  - Such long term improvement plans take > 1 year to develop, need to be flexible to adapt to market conditions, and cannot be developed using public funds for a non-owned property

# CONCLUSIONS

- A viable Airport on Whidbey Island Is highly beneficial for residents, contributing to economic sustainability, transportation resilience and sustainability, and public safety
- Owning and operating the airport is an appropriate activity for the port of Coupeville in Partnership with the City of Oak Harbor and Island County
- The airport is currently highly active and producing revenue
- For now, the **funding requests currently being made are to implement the transitional plan - acquire the property, complete deferred maintenance, and conduct the strategic and master planning activities for potential future improvement and development**
- For the current funding requests, the Transitional Plan (completed) demonstrates the acquisition makes sense, how the airport will be operated for now, and how much it will cost.
- The property has value in its current state regardless of the outcome of future strategic and master planning activities

# RESOURCES

Community Volunteer Network!

Department of Transportation – small airport development

WA Department of Transportation / Aviation Division

AOPA – Airport Support Network

WAMA – WA Airport Managers Association

NBAA – National Business Aviation Association

Independent Airport development consultants (Airport Master Plans)

Congressional Support

Community Volunteer Network!