

## AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 4, 2015

Time: 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Location: Bryan Room, Institute of Aviation

Members Present: Steve Carter (Chair), Deb Busey, Lori Cowdrey Benso (via phone), Jayne DeLuce, William Dick, John Frasca, Bill Giannetti, Bruce Knight, Robert McCleary, Max Mitchell, Alan Nudo, Laurel Prussing, Seamus Reilly, Craig Rost, Chris Schroeder, Dan Sholem, Bill Volk

Others Present: Pat Pioletti, Bruce Walden, Steve Wanzek

Members Absent: Tom Berns, Mike DeLorenzo, Amanda Fulfer, Karl Gnadt, Gozen Hartman, Marvin Lacy, Jud Nogle, Laura Weis

### Meeting Summary

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Chair Steve Carter started the Airport Advisory Committee at 3:42 p.m. Mr. Carter welcomed those attending and asked the group to go through a round of introductions. After the introductions, Mr. Carter reminded the group that the main goal of the Airport Advisory Committee is to oversee the implementation of the items recommended in the Airport Task Force’s Strategic Plan. He then encouraged committee members to sign up and participate on the subcommittees created after the April meeting of the Advisory Committee.
2. **Update on University Items** – Bruce Walden – reporting on behalf of Mike DeLorenzo – provided an overview of the University’s progress on the Task Force’s recommendations.
  - **Management Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Mr. Walden reported the University has been creating the RFP for a management company to oversee activities at Willard Airport. The RFP was released on May 14, 2015 with a due date to receive proposals on or before June 16. Mr. Walden reported has not been much interest from possible bidders. There were no interested parties at a recent pre-bid meeting. There has been contact with the companies that have downloaded the proposal and they have shown little interest in submitting a proposal after reviewing all requirements.

    - Chair Carter asked Mr. Walden to explain more about the requirements and possible concerns of the bidders. Mr. Walden explained the proposal has requirements listed such as the need for a management company to follow the guidelines in all collective bargaining agreements with employment unions. This could be one of the reasons for the minimal interest by outside management firms.

If there is no serious interest in the proposal, then the next step will be to proceed with the recruitment of a high-level CEO for Willard Airport. There has already been some work completed on the job description, position announcement, etc. to be prepared if this is needed.

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### - **Construction activities at Willard Airport**

Mr. Walden asked Steve Wanzek, Acting Airport Manager, to give a brief summary of the current construction projects underway at Willard Airport. Mr. Wanzek informed the group there is a \$4.5 million project in progress to widen the area around taxi-way C which runs parallel to the airport's primary runway known as runway Alpha. This will make it possible for 767s, wide bodied aircraft, to be able to use the airport runways without doing a 180-degree turn on the runway when taking off. This project started in the middle of May and is on time to finish in October.

Mr. Wanzek also reported he recently learned a \$1.9 million Federal grant has been awarded and will be announced soon. This money will be used in phase two of the same project currently underway to widen the runway. Phase two will include the addition of the shoulders around the same part of taxi-way C to runway Alpha.

### - **FlightStar Renovations**

Mr. Walden said there has been progress in the discussions to expand FlightStar's building. Mr. Walden asked Bill Giannetti if he would like to provide a summary of the progress to date for the renovation. Mr. Giannetti explained to the group his company and university officials have been working on developing plans that will include building a larger hangar so FlightStar can continue maintenance on American Airlines airplanes even after they phase in the larger 75-passenger jets that are too large to fit into the current hangar. This renovation is estimated to cost \$5 million. Once the project is complete, it is believed this will make FlightStar the only vendor in the region that will be able to provide service to the larger jets. Construction is tentatively set to begin this summer and could be finalized by December, 2015. Newt Dodds will be the general contractor for the project. Mr. Giannetti also noted FlightStar is also planning to send several of their mechanics back to school to be trained on maintaining the newer jets.

Mr. Walden noted that during these discussions with FlightStar, he was reminded of how complex the regulations are that cover the ALPs and they are working through the requirements with the FAA.

Craig Rost commented there has been substantial effort on Bruce Walden and Mike DeLorenzo's part to educate the community on the air service and what the Task Force recommendations are for Willard Airport. Several presentations have been given in recent months to multiple groups throughout Champaign, Urbana and Savoy. Steve Carter stated this is an important factor in keeping the community informed and reminded the group to send any suggestions for additional group presentations in the community.

### - **American Airlines Updates**

Mr. Walden noted American Airlines is making a timely remodel to their ticket counter area and a few other areas within the terminal. This is independent from university work.

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Steve Wanzek noted the remodel is partly occurring because of the merger between American Airlines and U.S. Airways being finalized and American Airline's effort to rebrand the company. This rebranding is being done throughout the country at all regional airports. It is hoped the American Airlines remodel will be completed before the middle of August.

Mr. Walden also informed to the group that American Airlines has announced they plan to add a sixth flight to Chicago from Willard Airport in the near future. This new flight should be in place by Fall, 2015.

### 3. Subcommittee Updates

#### **Airport Development –Dick Helton, Subcommittee Chair**

Bob McCleary reported on Dick Helton's behalf that the subcommittee met earlier in the year. The subcommittee will review the zoning around the airport and make recommendations for protecting air rights and zoning for specific areas such as economic development.

#### **Governance - Steve Carter, Subcommittee Chair**

Mr. Carter provided a summary of the first meeting for the subcommittee. The main goal of the Governance Subcommittee is to look at how to create an Airport Authority Board for an airport that is operated by a public university. The first task the subcommittee has agreed to complete is to have an economic impact analysis conducted by Sixel Consulting. Some of the changes that will be needed for an Airport Authority Board will require the local governing boards to review and vote to accept these changes. The impact analysis will be important information used to make the decisions of whether to approve changes suggested to the governing bodies.

The cost of the study is estimated to be \$15,000-17,000 and will be covered by local governments and the private sector; not the university. Jack Penning will prepare a scope of services for the economic impact analysis by the end of June.

Mr. Carter explained a smaller group of the subcommittee will soon meet to create a plan on how to collect the funds to cover the cost of the economic impacts analysis. This group will be coordinated by Craig Rost at Champaign County Economic Development Corporation and Alan Nudo will assist. Mr. Carter noted there is a lot of interest in an economic impact report and its benefits for future decisions involving the airport.

#### **Ground Transportation - Karl Gnad, Subcommittee Chair**

Bill Volk reported the first meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, June 23. Mr. Volk stated the MTD Board recently voted to end their Airbus route when the current contract expires in August 2015. This decision was made because the airport is outside

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the MTD's service district and the route would cost to the MTD to continue operating it now that the university will not be providing funding for the service. Other factors influencing the decision to end the route include the possible budget cuts announced recently by Governor Rauner and a reduction of state funding.

Bill Giannetti noted the Uber service has become very popular for passengers using Willard Airport. The community's demand for reliable, consistent transportation created by the poor taxi service at Willard Airport has made Uber a good fit for the area.

### **Marketing - Jayne DeLuce, Subcommittee Chair**

Jayne DeLuce reported the Marketing Subcommittee has met twice since April. The group met with Jack Penning of Sixel Consulting and went through the marketing plan Sixel has already drawn up. The marketing campaign will kick-off on August 19 with an unveiling of the new brand at Willard Airport. Ms. DeLuce noted that American Airlines decision to rebrand their image has worked well with the timing of the marketing campaign because of this planned kick-off being in the area of the remodeled ticket counter.

Ms. DeLuce explained there has been a bit of a change in new logo and it will be updated again when the larger jets are completely phased in. The 'Fly Champaign-Urbana' brand was revised to 'IFlyCU'. A new website address has been secured. It was originally going to be 'FlyCU', but the URL address for this was already owned and would have cost over \$10,000 to purchase it from the owner. The 'IFlyCU' will be used in hashtags advertising the airport. The goal after August 19 is that there will be advertising at local sporting events, in visitor's guides, newsprint ads, and a street team will be present at events this fall throughout the community.

Ms. DeLuce also reported customer testimonials were recorded at the end of May and these will be used in television ads and website ads.

Members of the Marketing Subcommittee also walked through the airport terminal to make note of areas to suggest for renovations to create a fresher appearance in the terminal and newer advertisement spacing.

### **Regional Aviation Development - Seamus Reilly**

Seamus Reilly reported there has been a meeting of the subcommittee with plenty of topics discussed. The different perspectives make this subcommittee quite interesting. Items discussed include the FAA regulations, the Institute of Aviation and its future, and the current construction projects on the runways. The research potential at the university is seen as an asset that can be used not only for the public sector, but also for the government and military sectors. The increasing demand of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) provides an outlet for development in the agricultural field, public and private companies, and the military.

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Mr. Reilly believes one of the recommendations from this subcommittee will be the creation of a vision document on what the future of aviation in Champaign County could become. This document would list what companies exist, growth opportunities in the area, and suggestions on how to use these advantageously for economic development. Mr. Reilly noted Parkland College will soon offer a course related to UAS devices and Horizon Hobby has shown an interest in this segment since they create UASs. The courses will be for commercial operations of UAS.

### 4. Additional Topics

**Congressman Davis Listening Session** – The Congressman had a good turnout during a recent listening session held at Willard Airport. It was one of four stops that day for Congressman Davis. Steve Wanzek gave a short presentation at the listening tour identifying items important to the airport for Congressman Davis to focus on while in Washington. These included the stalled project to replace the airport tower, capital investment in the airport improvement program and the passenger fee. A majority of the discussion during the listening session was on UASs.

**Taxation system** – Laurel Prussing handed out a recent Chicago Tribune article that explains why the taxation system has encouraged the airline companies to create baggage fees. One item the Champaign County First organization is encouraging is to increase the passenger facility charge that can be used for airport improvements. Steve Wanzek explained the money the airport receives from this passenger facility charge has to be used on projects that meet specific criteria and has to be approved by the FAA.

**Discussion on Tower** – Steve Wanzek explained the FAA will be updating the radars in the current tower. The work to upgrade the equipment will occur over the next two years, including training the operators in the Control Tower. This led to a discussion of the location for a future Control Tower. Bill Giannetti noted that the current tower has already been raised one level to be taller than the current buildings. If the tower remains where it is currently located, then any larger buildings that are built will create a line-of-sight issue for the control tower.

### 5. Wrap Up & Adjourn

Steve Carter closed the meeting at 4:56 p.m. by thanking everyone for their time.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, August 6, 2015

3:30-5:00 p.m.

Bryan Room, Institute of Aviation