

COMMISSION AGENDA

Item No: 7A
Meeting: 1/17/23

DATE: December 30, 2022
TO: Port Commission
FROM: Eric D. Johnson, Executive Director
Sponsor: Commissioner Deanna Keller
Project Manager: Sean Eagan
SUBJECT: Resolution 2023-04-PT Commercial Airport Siting

A. ACTION REQUESTED

Consideration of Resolution 2023-04-PT expressing opinions on the siting of a new commercial airport in Western Washington.

B. SYNOPSIS

In response to constituent inquiries as to where the Port of Tacoma stands on the potential siting of a commercial airport in Pierce County resulting from potential recommendations of the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC), the proposed resolution seeks to express a policy position for the Port.

C. BACKGROUND

Created by the state Legislature in 2019, with Commission members appointed by the Governor, the CACC is charged with providing recommendations to the Legislature for how to solve the forecasted shortage of capacity for commercial air passenger service, air cargo, and general aviation.

The Legislature has asked the CACC to recommend two potential sites. They are prohibited by the enabling statute from recommending a King County location or a site that would conflict with Joint Base Lewis McChord.

The CACC began in October 2019 and is required to meet three deadlines:

- Provide an initial list of six possible locations to the Legislature by January 1, 2021 [Completed]
- Provide a list of the top two locations (options) by October 15, 2022 [Completed]
- Provide a single preferred location recommendation by June 15, 2023

Rather than list two top locations, the Commission has, instead, narrowed choices down to two options:

- Add capacity to Paine Field according to its Airport Master Plan (with potential for additional capacity), assume SeaTac Airport executes its Sustainable Airport Master Plan (SAMP), assist other airports interested in pursuing regional commercial service (distributed air service supported by emerging technology)
- Continue to develop a greenfield site option with a two (2) runway configuration. Pierce County Central, Pierce County East and Thurston County Central are the

three greenfield sites remaining under consideration for a new airport, out of the 10 that were analyzed by the state's consultant.

The consultant for the Washington Aviation System Plan (WASP) has been conducting technical analysis that also serves the needs of the Commission. The two activities are separate endeavors but have similar interests. The reason the CACC decided to continue to consider the three greenfield sites is because all the analysis has not yet been completed; the CACC had a legislative deadline to report a reduced list of locations to the legislature. Since there are still three sites being analyzed, the CACC chose to continue to examine these three sites as one of the options. The analysis that is remaining includes:

- Airspace review – with assistance from the FAA
- Air cargo analysis
- Additional environmental factor analysis
- Transportation/access analysis
- Infrastructure analysis
- Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) cost estimates

Once this analysis is complete, the consultant planning team will provide the data to the Commission. We anticipate the first round of information in the February 2023 time frame and will schedule a commission meeting once the information is available.

At this time, the CACC is only focusing on potential airport locations. Future governance of the airport remains unclear. A variety of entities manage airports in Washington, including ports, counties and cities.

D. SCOPE

Resolution 2023-04, if adopted, would express the following policy position:

1. The Port of Tacoma supports the CACC recommendation of adding capacity to Paine Field according to its Airport Master Plan (with potential for additional capacity), and assuming the Port of Seattle executes its Sustainable Airport Master Plan (SAMP) for SeaTac Airport;
2. The Port of Tacoma is not interested in sponsoring, owning nor operating an airport in the Port District and is also not interested in purchasing property using eminent domain or other means to do so;
3. The Port of Tacoma believes the proximity of the Pierce County sites to JBLM and its strategic operations, the lack of infrastructure to support transport to and from I-5, and the potential devastating impact on rural farm and residential lands make the identified Pierce County sites poor choices for an airport the size that is needed to alleviate the overcrowding at SeaTac Airport; and
4. The Port of Tacoma believes the Washington State Legislature should revisit the enabling statute creating the CACC and establish a more integrated public transportation system criteria for potential locations. Revisiting the enabling

statute should also include criteria that considers both governance and financing options.

E. FINANCIAL SUMMARY

N/A

E. ECONOMIC INVESTMENT/JOB CREATION

Unknown. A new commercial airport in Pierce County has the prospect of creating thousands of new construction jobs as well as a long-term jobs associated with the operation of the airport. However, due to uncertainty around location, potential size and scope of the proposed airport, staff is unable to quantify these figures at this time.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/REVIEW

Unknown. A new commercial airport in Pierce County will likely have significant impacts on land use, water quality, air quality and traffic. Other, undefined impacts, likely would also occur. However, due to uncertainty around location, potential size and scope of the proposed airport, staff is unable to quantify these figures at this time.

G. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

1. **Do nothing:** The Port, as of this time, does not have a role in the decision making process around the siting of an airport. As such, there is no reason compelling the Commission to act at this time. However, constituents have been inquiring as to where the Commission stands on this issue given the authority ports have to operate airports and, more generally, promote economic development.
2. **Support the siting of an airport in Pierce County:** As economic development leader, the Port could explicitly advocate for an airport to be sited in Pierce County. The airport, however, will likely have significant environmental impacts. It is unclear at this time whether such a trade-off is worthwhile.
3. **Support the siting of an airport in Pierce County and seek to operate the airport:** As economic development leader, the Port could explicitly advocate for an airport to be sited in Pierce County. The Port could also operate the airport under authority granted to it by RCW 53. As economic development leader, the Port could explicitly advocate for an airport to be sited in Pierce County.

H. PREVIOUS ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

Date	Action	Amount
December 15, 2022	Commission briefing by CACC	\$0
TOTAL		\$0

I. ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

- Resolution 2023-04-PT
- Presentation