

# Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission:

## A STATUS REPORT



In October 2019, the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC) convened to begin the process of developing recommendations for a new primary commercial aviation facility in Washington. The commission was created by the Washington State Legislature because of concerns that Sea-Tac International Airport is nearing its capacity limits. Several studies released over the span of several years corroborate the persistent challenge of commercial aviation capacity in the Puget Sound region. In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Aviation Baseline Study currently underway confirms these findings.

Aviation demand is multi-faceted and includes many types of passenger demand (international, interstate and regional) as well as air cargo and general aviation. Each type of demand has differing facility needs, such as runway lengths and aircraft storage. While part of the capacity solution could be a new commercial facility, there may also be opportunities for current airports to accommodate some passenger and air cargo demand. In addition, emerging technologies such as electric-powered and other alternate propulsion aircraft may change the equation of air transportation demand in the years to come. Adding additional complexity to the decisions at hand is the uncertainty around the long-term impacts of the COVID19 pandemic on future aviation demand.

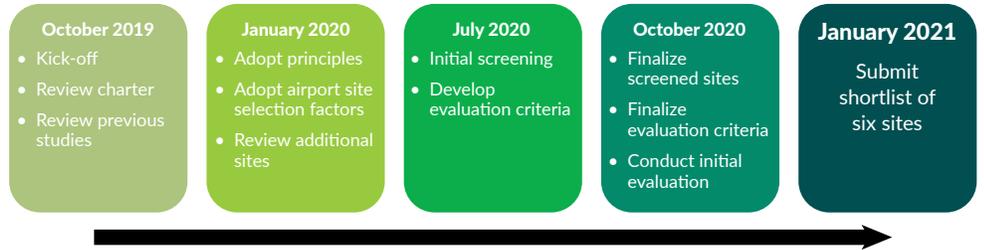
The Commission has adopted a three-phase methodology. For Phase One, the Legislature has charged CACC to develop a short list of six airports by January 1, 2021. During Phase Two, it will identify the top two airports by September 1, 2021. During Phase Three, the CACC is required to choose, by sixty percent majority vote, a single preferred location by January 1, 2022. The commission shall project a timeline for the development of an additional commercial aviation facility (single preferred location) that is completed and functional by 2040 and must make recommendations on future Washington state long-range commercial facility needs. It should be noted the schedule for these recommendations may be extended by the Legislature due to the disruption in workflow and communications, and the uncertainty with return to normal aviation activity caused by the pandemic.

## PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Very early in its process, the commission adopted four fundamental planning principles to serve as the foundation of any recommendations it makes

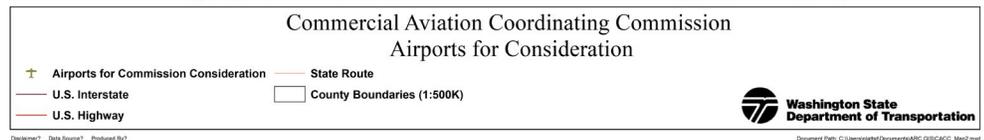
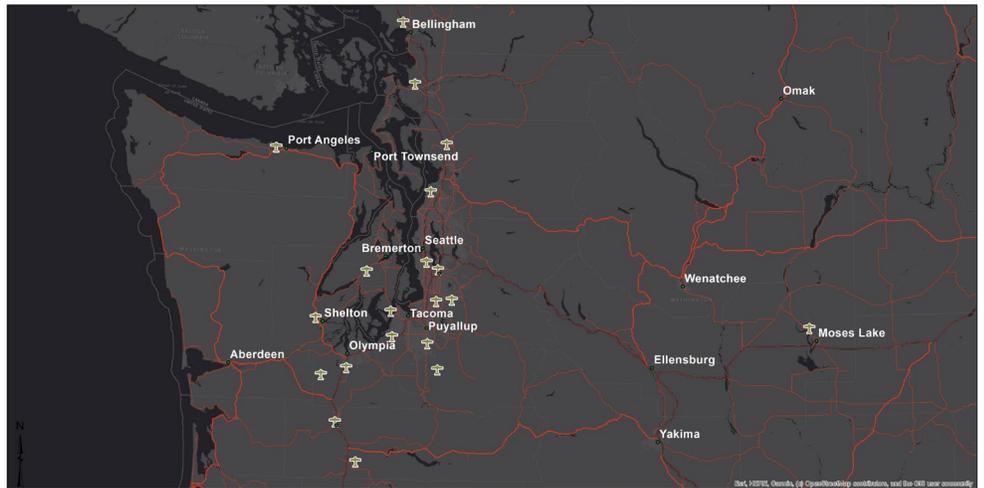
1. **Public benefit:** is defined as benefiting the greater good, or the broader public, over an individual entity or group.
2. **Economic feasibility:** defined as the degree to which the economic advantages of something to be made, done, or achieved are greater than the economic costs: Can we fund it?
3. **Environmental responsibility:** defined as the responsible interaction with the environment to avoid depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow for long-term environmental quality. The practice of environmental sustainability helps to ensure that the needs of today's population are met without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
4. **Social equity:** defined as fair access to opportunity, livelihood and the full participation in the political and cultural life of a community.

## Current CACC Phase One Schedule



The commission started with a list of 20 airports in Washington, identified through a number of prior planning efforts such as the Flight Plan (1992), Washington's Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) (2006) and the Regional Aviation Baseline Study currently underway.

In its early meetings, the commission took two important actions. The first was to express the mutually-shared values that would guide their future decisions—these **Planning Principles** were incorporated into the CACC Charter, adopted at its January meeting. The second foundational action was to adopt **Airport Site Selection Factors**, which would screen out any airports that are fundamentally unsuitable for consideration as an additional major commercial airport.



When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the commission was beginning to consider criteria for evaluating potential airport sites. Although the Commission could not meet, members continued to receive briefing materials and workbooks to help them formulate evaluation criteria that could be used to assess the suitability of various airports.

THREE BASIC STRATEGIES, AND HOW THEY DIFFER		
Expand/Improve one or more existing airports	One very large Sea-Tac sized airport	Both a large airport AND expand/improve existing airports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Necessitates an existing facility or facilities that can truly accommodate projected demand</li> <li>• Lends itself to a phase solution</li> <li>• Requires coordinated action across several locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would likely require a greenfield solution</li> <li>• Would likely require 20 years to come online, possibly after Sea-Tac capacity threshold is exceeded.</li> <li>• Would require a significant sponsor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require a greenfield solution</li> <li>• Lends itself to phased solutions</li> <li>• Would require coordinated action across several locations</li> <li>• Leverages near term capacity while pursuing a longer-term option</li> <li>• Allows more time to identify primary major facility needs while meeting immediate capacity shortfalls</li> </ul>

In addition, WSDOT staff have reached out to local jurisdictions to gauge their interest in whether they would like to be considered for future expansion of their local airports. Staff has also sent informal workbooks for commissioners to provide initial feedback to help staff conduct their analysis of potential sites.

One of the questions now facing the commission has to do with the strategic direction for future airport capacity investments. At their last in person meeting, the commission discussed three basic strategies for meeting Washington’s aviation needs.

To help answer that question, the WSDOT Aviation Division has been analyzing the physical characteristics of Western Washington airports such as runway length, access to transportation, and distance from major populations centers.

At its July 22, 2020 meeting, the commission will consider this information and decide on a strategic direction for moving forward on its recommendations. The commission will also be discussing the evaluation criteria that would guide their examination of potential facilities. In addition to a discussion that measures which attributes might be used to assess a site’s consistency with the CACC Planning Principles, the commission will discuss other kinds of measures for evaluating the suitability of potential sites.

**AIRPORT SITE SELECTION FACTORS**

In January, the Commission adopted six Airport Site Selection Factors which are minimum requirements necessary to accommodate future demand.

1. **Land:** A supplemental airport would require 1,000-2,000 acres, and a replacement, or more like a SeaTac-equivalent sized airport could require as much as 4,600 acres.
2. **Existing Facilities:** Runway length, available land on one or both ends of the runway, adequate space to add a runway.
3. **Environmental Constraints:** Known concerns or protections for habitat and species, wetlands, weather patterns and similar topics.
4. **Proximity to Population Centers:** Travel time calculations that demonstrate good access for citizens.
5. **Airport Sponsor:** Governance; Local government commitment for both development and operation, and liaison with the public, local governments, industry and others.
6. Consideration of **multimodal and transportation factors**, such as access to roadways and public transportation.



It is the Commission's intention to allow for direct public input when physical meetings can be resumed. Unfortunately, due to social distancing requirements, the July 22 meeting will be conducted through a virtual meeting. The public will be able to observe the July 22 meeting online through a Microsoft Teams Live Event.

Members of the public are encouraged to provide any questions or input prior to the meeting. Public comments will be shared with commissioners and a summary of comments and questions will be provided at the July 22 meeting. Those without computer access will be able to telephone in.



Details of the upcoming meeting and summaries of all past meetings are included on the project website [www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/commission](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/commission).

From July to October, the Commission will be seeking public comment on potential sites, evaluation criteria and the evaluation process. After the short-list of six sites is developed, the Commission will continue to welcome public input throughout Phases Two and Three.

**AT ANY TIME, THE PUBLIC IS ENCOURAGED TO DIRECT QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:**  
**Christina Crea**

**WSDOT Communications**

360-810-0902

[CACC@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:CACC@wsdot.wa.gov)



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