**Tennessee Aviation System Plan (TASP) and Economic Impact Study**

TDOT Aeronautics Division Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

**Attendees**

* Michelle Frazier, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* John Paul Saalwaechter, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Lyle Monroe, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Jacob Brooks, P.E., TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Steve Upshaw, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Anna Walker, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* John Briggs, TDOT Aeronautics Division
* Kirk Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission
* George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission
* Patrick Wilson, McGhee Tyson Airport
* Roy Remington, Millington – Memphis Airport
* Robert Ramsey, Nashville International Airport & John C. Tune Airport
* Dan Cogan, Elizabethton Municipal Airport
* Doug Kibbey, Clifton-Hassell Field
* Pragati Srivastava, Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization
* Amy Kosanovic, TDOT Freight Planning
* Danielle Hagewood, TDOT Strategic Transportation Investments
* Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn
* Taylor Filaroski, Kimley-Horn

 **Meeting Introduction**

Due to stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions as a result of COVID-19, the third TASP AC meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, kicked off the meeting by explaining that there has been a lot of progress with the TASP and Economic Impact Study since the AC’s last project meeting in April. He thanked the TASP AC for engaging in a collaborative effort to the benefit of these projects. Michelle Frazier, TDOT Aeronautics Division, thanked everyone for their time and expressed the benefits that these projects will provide to the Tennessee aviation community. She stated that while there was still a lot of work to accomplish, there have been many more tasks accomplished than there are left to complete.

**Presentation of TASP Airport Roles**

Following these introductory remarks, Zach DeVeau, the Kimley-Horn Project Manager, presented a PowerPoint that provided an update on the TASP and Economic Impact Study. An outline of the presentation is provided below.

* Since we last met…
* Project Update: Issues
* Project Update: Intermodal
* Project Update: Airport Roles
* Project Update: Existing System Performance
* Project Update: Economic Impact Study
* Next Steps

Members of the TASP AC asked questions and provided feedback throughout the presentation. These questions, comments, and responses are organized by agenda item in the following sections.

**Since we last met…**

This portion of the presentation focused on general project updates since April. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, noted that the timeline for completing the Economic Impact Study had been fast-tracked in order to accommodate the January legislative session. There were no questions or comments during this portion.

**Project Update: Explore Aviation Issues**

This portion of the presentation provided an overview of Chapter 4: Explore Aviation Issues. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, noted that the TASP AC had provided comments on this Chapter. These comments included Dan Cogan, Elizabethton Municipal Airport, who noted that the Hangar Availability section highlights the growing gap between hangar needs and the state’s ability to fund that type of development; and Robert Ramsey, Nashville International Airport & John C. Tune Airport, who noted the impact of the decline in purchasing power of passenger facility charges (PFCs).

Roy Remington, Millington-Memphis Airport, noted that this Chapter did a good job of synthesizing what happened with the fuel bill (“Changes to State Fuel Tax”). However, he noted that he was left wondering what was next with regards to this issue. Related to his work with the Tennessee Aviation Association (TAA) and the “Hangar Availability” and “Infrastructure Needs” issues, he noted that airports are trying to develop from an economic standpoint. TDOT’s renewed emphasis on infrastructure provides the backbone to the state’s aviation system, but airports also need to pursue revenue-generating projects such as hangars. Roy Remington, Millington-Memphis Airport, stated his belief that the state should pursue a “parallel path,” where there remains an emphasis on infrastructure but that revenue-generating projects such as hangars are not neglected. Based on his experience with the TAA, this is important to the continued success of airports in the state. He also stated that with regards to the “Pandemic” issue, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on military operations. This directly relates to fuel sales and total operations at the state’s airports. While he thinks that military operations may be the first to rebound, he is also concerned about the long-term implications of this dip.

Patrick Wilson, McGhee Tyson Airport, also noted that TDOT is encouraging infrastructure development on a larger scale. He acknowledged the importance of economic development projects, but that the state’s airports need infrastructure in order to continue developing.

Robert Ramsey, Nashville International Airport & John C. Tune Airport, followed up on his comment about PFCs. He noted that PFCs are the main driver of revenue at commercial service airports, so the fact that they’ve been flat for decades means that commercial service airports have been losing out on revenue. He noted that an increase in PFCs would help commercial service airports recover from the pandemic. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, responded that PFCs are unfortunately solely a federal issue, and that they’ve been considered multiple times over the years but there has been no movement on increasing them. Patrick Wilson, McGhee Tyson Airport, stated that including PFCs in the Issues Chapter (“Funding”) would allow the state to have additional push with the federal government with regards to this issue. Robert Ramsey, Nashville International Airport & John C. Tune Airport, agreed, stating that its inclusion would show that PFCs are a major issue with the federal government’s constituents. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, added that its inclusion would provide context to federal regulators. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, provided further context to this discussion, He noted that the TASP includes a Policy and Investigation Recommendations Chapter, which in part will be used to address how the state can enhance policies related to aviation. He stated that the conversation surrounding PFCs may be useful to include in this Chapter.

Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, provided information regarding hangar availability across the state to address the earlier discussion regarding revenue-generating projects. He noted that there are very few available hangar spaces in both T-hangars and box hangars across the state.

George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission, noted his interest in the “Future Aircraft and Fuel Sources” issue. He stated that the state should help airports anticipate future infrastructure needs with regards to future aircraft. For example, he stated that the size of tie-downs has changed over the forty years he’s flown due the changing sizes of standard aircraft. However, he stated that general aviation airports don’t have the ability to determine these dimensions on their own, and asked if this could be done through the system plan. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, responded that the Kimley-Horn team has looked into this very issue through projects with other states. Specifically, Washington recently completed an “electric aircraft” study, which would be interesting to evaluate to see if aspects could be included in the TASP.

**Project Update: Review of Intermodal Integration and Airport Access**

This portion of the presentation provided an overview of Chapter 6: Review of Intermodal Integration and Airport Access. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, noted that this topic had been covered in the previous TASP Modal Integration Working Group meeting. During that meeting, the topic of how Tennessee’s intermodal connectivity relates to other states was brought up. He noted that the project team is now reviewing other system plans to see how Tennessee compares.

Pragati Srivastava, Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization, stated that she had submitted comments to this Chapter. She noted that the Chapter was well-written and comprehensive, but that her follow-up comments related to the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization’s [Livability 2050: Regional Transportation Plan](o%09https%3A/memphismpo.org/plans/livability-2050-regional-transportation-plan). She noted that this plan is focused in part on safety and security, and includes airports.

Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, asked what the key issues and concerns related to intermodal connectivity, in a standard year, were for the TASP AC. Pragati Srivastava, Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization, stated that there are currently a few projects in and around Memphis International Airport (MEM) related to airport access. These projects have continued through the pandemic, with the understanding that access needs haven’t changed. Pragati Srivastava, Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization, also noted that Memphis has limited transit access that could be improved, although the rise of rideshare like Uber and Lyft have lessened the need for such services.

**Project Update: Airport Classifications and NPIAS Evaluation**

This portion of the presentation provided an overview of Chapter 7: Airport Classifications and NPIAS Evaluation. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, noted that this topic had been discussed previously by the TASP AC, and that he appreciates the feedback provided thus far.

Airport roles were discussed as a way to make the state’s aviation system competitive, particularly with regards to the aviation systems of states bordering Tennessee. The TASP AC is concerned about competition with these states, particularly with regards to losing business and based aircraft. Roy Remington, Millington-Memphis Airport, noted that Tennessee borders more states than any other state. One of his goals is for Tennessee to be as competitive as it can be with regards to neighboring states. He noted that while this problem is not specifically addressed in Chapter 4: Explore Aviation Issues, anything that would bolster defenses on the perimeter to retain business in the state or to win business back should be prioritized. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, related this conversation back to the very first TASP AC meeting, where it was discussed as a problem for the state. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics, stated that there has been a discussion surrounding people basing their aircraft in one state but living in another. Tennessee could be losing based aircraft to bordering states’ airports. He also noted that the general aviation visitor spending portion of the Economic Impact Study takes distance to a bordering state into account. Tennessee’s airports that are within 20 miles of another state have their visitor numbers increased by a set percentage, to account for the fact that they likely have more out-of-state visitors due to their location. Additionally, Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, noted that while it hasn’t been analyzed yet, the Rates and Charges Survey completed as part of the TASP will also help provide context to this discussion. This survey will outline what airports are charging for hangar space and fuel, and may provide insight into how to be more competitive with border states. George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission, asked if there was a way to determine aircraft movements at airports in states bordering Tennessee. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, answered that while we can determine how many of Tennessee’s based aircraft are owned by out-of-state owners, we can’t determine how many of Tennessee’s aircraft owners base their aircraft out-of-state. That would involve coordinating a data share with all of the states that surround Tennessee, and they are not likely to want to provide that information.

**Project Update: Inventory and Existing System Performance**

This portion of the presentation provided an overview of Chapter 2: Inventory and Existing System Performance, which has not yet been provided to the TASP AC. George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission, had a question about the example performance measure (PM) provided, which was “Percent of airports meeting the airport pavement management system (APMS) objective – Runways > 65.” He noted that he had seen some examples of pavement condition index (PCI) standards where cosmetic changes affect the PCI rating, and asked if this was a situation that is seen nationally. He was concerned that cosmetic flaws, but structural soundness, would negatively impact an airport’s PCI and thus the overall assessment of this PM. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, noted that this was not a situation he was familiar with, but would want to confirm with the Kimley-Horn Pavement Management Team. John Paul Saalwaechter, TDOT Aeronautics Division, provided further context to the question, He noted that in the past, there was a slight difference in interpretation of ASTM standards between consultants. However, this difference only affected a few airports in the state. The current firm TDOT Aeronautics Division uses to conduct pavement inspections does not deviate from these standards, meaning these differences will eventually disappear and the impacts of cosmetic flaws will not be a problem anymore. John Paul Saalwaechter, TDOT Aeronautics Division, assured everyone of the soundness of the PCI inspections and thus, the performance measure.

George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission, asked about airports that have relatively low PCI ratings but that are not in need of repairs, as a result of this differing interpretation. John Paul Saalwaechter, TDOT Aeronautics Division, provided a brief overview of the difference in stress types and severities. He explained that structurally sound airports that showed some weathering (cosmetic flaws) were resulting in a low PCI in some instances, when actually the opposite is actually worse. George Huddleston, Tennessee Aeronautics Commission, stated that he brought this issue up to note that if we’re using these PCI ratings as a threshold, they may be artificially low. Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, stated that performance on PMs will help provide recommendations as part of the TASP, but only to estimate overall needs of the system. Specific airports that fail a PM will not be automatically suggested to have a project completed to fix the problem.

**Project Update: Economic Impact Study**

This portion of the presentation provided an overview of the Economic Impact Study and its progress thus far. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, stated that the Economic Impact Study Executive Summary would be rolled out soon, but that airports would also be receiving individual airport graphics containing information about their airport’s total economic impact. After this, airports would also be receiving an individual airport brochure, which contains further information and context. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, also noted that TDOT Aeronautics Division would be providing PowerPoint templates to each of the airports to plug in their individual airport economic impacts and results as a public outreach tool.

**Project Update: Next Steps**

Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, provided an overview of what drafts would be provided next to the TASP AC. First would be Chapter 2: Inventory and Existing System Performance, followed by Economic Impacts of Tennessee Air Cargo. The Economic Impact Study results would be provided next, with other Economic Impact Study deliverables to follow.

**Closing Comments**

Zach DeVeau, Kimley-Horn, noted that there has been a lot of movement on the TASP and Economic Impact Study this year. He thanked the airports for their support and noted that it was exciting to see the data collection begin to result in drafts. Evan Lester, TDOT Aeronautics Division, thanked the TASP AC again, noting that the information shared during the presentation had been extremely beneficial. There have been a lot of good ideas provided that will be included in the deliverables. He also noted that the next time the TASP AC meets, the Economic Impact Study will have been published.

Note: a copy of the presentation provided at the meeting can be found here: [www.tasp2040.com/public-outreach/](http://www.tasp2040.com/public-outreach/).

# **Action Items**

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| **Action** | **Party Responsible** | **Status** |
| Update project website with meeting materials | Kimley-Horn | Complete |
| Review and incorporate edits and suggestions to the TASP Chapters | TDOT and Kimley-Horn | Ongoing |
| Provide Chapter 2: Inventory and Existing System Performance to TASP AC | TDOT and Kimley-Horn | Upcoming |