

COMMISSION AGENDA - POLICY AND STAFF BRIEFINGS

ITEM NO. 10a

DATE: September 10, 1987

DATE OF MEETING 10/13/87

TO: James D. Dwyer, Executive Director

FROM: Dan Dingfield, Director of Development
Vern Ljungren, Director of Aviation

SUBJECT: SeaTac Area Plan Update: Policy Briefing and Action
Recommendations

As King County's SeaTac Area Plan Update process nears completion, and recommendations are being prepared to be forwarded to the King County Council, it would be useful for all involved parties if the Port of Seattle deliberated the issues and recorded its position on them. Three Commission actions might be contemplated: 1) commenting on the SeaTac Area Plan Update as a whole, 2) adoption or endorsement of the North SeaTac Park Plan, which is a component of the SeaTac Area Plan, 3) establishing a policy framework for consideration of a SeaTac South Access/Road Improvement District Plan, which is also a component element of the SeaTac Area Plan.

Discussion

Forthcoming King County actions on the SeaTac Area Plan Update will establish the framework for future plans, decisions, and public investments in the airport area. As co-sponsors and involved participants, the Port should register its official position(s) with King County in a timely fashion so dimensions of the Plan which have direct bearing upon us have their fullest consideration. Such Port deliberation and action can also set the stage for our further involvement in planning activities and intergovernmental negotiations surrounding implementation of plan elements. This memorandum sets forth the issues as we see them and makes recommendations for Commission action.

SeaTac Area Plan Update

This plan update supplements preceding community planning efforts, most of which involved the Port as co-sponsor or co-participant. The prior plans being affected are the Highline Community Plan (1977), Sea-Tac Communities Plan (1976), Area Zoning (1981), and the King County Comprehensive Plan (1985). The SeaTac Area Plan Update is best thought of as a conceptual plan, or a strategic plan, for future actions. It is developed as a policy plan designed to guide land use, transportation, development, and recreation decisions of King County, the Port of Seattle, other public agencies such as school and fire districts, and private developers.

The Plan is also the result of an extensive community participation process. In its broadest characterization then, it represents a consensus on physical development goals for the area among the interested and effected parties, whether individual or institutional.

Another way to view the Area Plan Update is to describe what it isn't. It is not a commitment to specific actions, projects, developments, responsibilities, or implementing arrangements of any form.

Aviation and Development staff have reviewed the SeaTac Area Plan Update components and agree with it. Its adoption will provide a positive basis for future action(s) and we would recommend that the Port communicate its appreciation of the effort and its endorsement of the Plan. The elements of this Plan have been the subject of previous Commission briefings.

South SeaTac Land Uses

This plan component establishes the potential for a general commercial area south of the airport. It provides the land use framework for future Port development planning. Its recommendations are acceptable and appear to pose no problems for what the Port might contemplate. As it is a framework, the opportunity exists to revisit specific issues at a later date if necessary.

North SeaTac Park

This is an Update of the 1979 North SeaTac Park Plan adopted by the Port and King County in 1980. Quoting the Update's Introduction

The study has been coordinated with the community plan update being carried out by King County with the cooperation of the Port of Seattle. The County and the Port are being assisted by the SeaTac Area Update Citizens Advisory Committee. The park plan update has been advised by a workshop advisory group composed of a subcommittee of the Citizens Advisory Committee, area residents, and representatives from King County, the Port of Seattle, and the Federal Aviation Administration to provide community participation.

During this process, four alternative park development plans were identified. The discussion/review process yielded a hybrid plan based upon those four alternatives. A strong consensus was developed around this plan and it is presently the subject of our consideration. Phased development of the park is also recommended. Implementation strategies were considered and a framework for implementation was created. The above items are contained in pgs. 36-42 and 45-47 of the Plan Update, and are appended to this memorandum as well.

While considerable consensus was reached among participants in the planning process, a consensus resolution concerning the planned fate of Sunset Activity Center facilities in the clear zone area bounded by So. 142nd/144th streets and So. 136th was not established. The proposed plan establishes a "safety and risk" policy criteria upon which the entire effort was based. To quote it:

For park planning purposes, the study will use an "inner safety zone" and an "outer safety zone" modeled after the

"Airport Land Use Planning Handbook" prepared for the California Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics, (July 1983). Unless there are overriding liability considerations for doing something else these assumptions will be used.

As a general guide in planning the park, the farther away the area is from the end of the runway, the more intense uses may be. Uses with dispersed numbers of people will be encouraged closer to the airport. Uses which involve large assemblies of people will be discouraged. (p.28)

The Update Plan specifically highlights this issue on p. 34. Again quoting:

No single issue has been more controversial during the planning process than the issue of the operation of the Sunset Activity Center under lease agreement to the Port of Seattle. The issue is one of application of the Density Guidelines developed during the 1980 Master plan to the operations of the Sunset Activity Center buildings. For the Port of Seattle as the landowner and lessor, the issue is one of monitoring "Safe, sensible numbers of people" in an area within an outer safety zone. For the Greater Highline Community Parks Board (GHCPB), the issue is one of financial viability and the desire to draw numbers of people to the buildings to raise funds to support mainenance and operations of the buildings.

.....All workshop Group participants at Workshop #6 agreed, "the Sunset Activity Center provides an important service to the greater Highline community." All participants except one agreed that the Sunset Activity Center should be considered for relocation because potential risks exist.....All acknowledged the issue to be one of public policy for the Port of Seattle, the FAA, and the GHCPB to negotiate.

.....The plan recommends that the Sunset Activity Center be retained in its current location because current political and financial realities make its relocation appear difficult. However, if it is financially feasible, it should be considered for relocation because of risks at the present location.

The Plan section addressing implementation strategies makes no single recommendation about who is to accomplish what. Quoting it again:

Rather than recommending a single strategy, the Workshop Group recommended that negotiations begin immediately among King County, the Port of Seattle, and the Greater Highline Community Parks Board to establish appropriate implementation roles for each.

The point of reviewing the Plan in this manner is to highlight the fact that considerable consensus about a significant majority of the Plan recommendations exists. It recommends, on the two crucial issues of the fate of the Sunset Activity Center and responsibilities for implementation, that negotiation be the mechanism employed to seek resolution.

Such an approach should be acceptable to the Port. If this is so, then it paves the way for recommended Port Commission action on the North SeaTac Park Master Plan Update. Two actions are proposed:

Formal adoption of the Plan and,

Formulation of Port policies which will guide negotiations

Recommended policies are set forth at the end of this memorandum.

A final element of the SeaTac Area Plan Update requiring Commission consideration encompasses the issues of airport south access and the proposed road improvement district (RID).

Airport South Access/Road Improvement District (RID)

As far back as the mid-1970's, the Port has explored alternative means for providing terminal access from the south. Three objectives supported this effort:

- 1) customer (airport user) convenience
- 2) terminal access and parking problem(s) resolution
- 3) traffic congestion conflict resolution at the intersections of So. 188th & SR 99 and So. 188th & 28th So.

King County denied the Port's application for a specific south access project designed to meet these objectives in late 1986. Their basis for doing so was probably quite sound. They did so on the basis that the transportation planning taking place in the SeaTac Area Plan Update indicated that a regional transportation plan approach ought to be pursued to address the issues raised by future airport needs and probable needs of future commercial development in the area south of the airport. As a result, they concluded that proposed improvements which dealt primarily with local transportation problems fell short of that region's needs.

The Washington State Department of Transportation funded a component of the SeaTac Area Plan Update transportation planning which specifically addressed the issues of demand for a completed SR 509 and its preferred alignment. The SeaTac Area Plan Update transportation element recommends a regional transportation system plan which addresses regional needs including those of the Port's aviation facility. Additionally, it incorporated assessment of issues pertaining to the completion of SR 509, system improvements to Interstate 5, capacity improvements to SR 99, and operational improvements to So. 188th. This difference in approach needs to be clearly understood. The County recommends a regional system plan approach; the Port had previously sought to make airport and related local improvements.

The County plan recommends a sound regional plan. In brief, it recommends completion of SR 509 along a new alignment connecting it to I-5 at So. 210th/211th. This would be a new I-5/SR 509 interchange. The interchange at I-5 and So. 200th would be decommissioned. Airport south access would be a 5 lane limited access parkway connecting to SR 509 on

the south and following a path somewhere in the 26th/28th So. corridor to the south terminal drive system and south wing of the parking garage. It passes under So. 188th St. reducing congestion at this problematic intersection. These improvements would reduce congestion along a troubled segment of I-5, reduce congestion and possible need for expansion of SR 99, create a new west side corridor, and alleviate several arterial intersection problems.

As a regional transportation system plan, the County recommendations are good and the Port should endorse the plan as a component of the SeaTac Area Plan Update.

Identifying implementation opportunities and assigning responsibility for them becomes the next large issue to be addressed. Since mid-1986 the Port has had to turn its attention from SeaTac area transportation issues to directly face the needs of terminal access drives and parking management in an attempt to improve the basic functioning of the airport terminal facilities themselves. CH₂M/Hill was retained to assist the Aviation Division's on airport access planning. Their report was received in September 1987.

The improvements CH₂M/Hill recommend would solve the problems the airport now faces in transportation/parking management. Those recommendations are being placed in the context of the comprehensive plan review requested by the Commission and presently underway with Aviation staff and the selected consulting team. Therefore, action recommendations will emerge in approximately six months from that review process.

It should be noted though, that the CH₂M/Hill study finds that sufficient freeway and terminal drive capacity exists to accommodate all future access needs from the north. This does not mean that this is the preferable solution to all issues related to south access. It merely states that from a theoretical capacity viewpoint, airport growth can be accommodated within the system we have in place if that is the long range solution we choose to pursue.

As previously described, access to the terminal was not, and is not, the only reason to consider Port participation in creating a south access opportunity. Customer convenience, solution of related area traffic problems and supporting general commercial development on Port properties south of the airport all warrant continued Port efforts toward achieving south access. The CH₂M/Hill findings do indicate that not having south access isn't a fundamental obstacle to the airport's growing to its designed capacity.

Port staff (Dwyer, Dingfield, Ljungren, Ritchie) recently met with top W.S.D.O.T. officials to explore the State's plans for completion of SR 509, beginning with the new First South Bridge project and extending on to its recommended new tie-in with I-5. They confirmed that the new alignment proposed by the County was preferable from a State viewpoint. They also made it very clear that the new bridge project was top priority. Other large King County area projects were unfunded, needed new sources of revenue, and were not prioritized yet, in their judgment. Assuming a revenue source, they stated that it would be 12-15 years from now before one could expect completion of SR 509.

Assuming that Port participation in, and pursuit of, a south access project is meritorious, its probable realization extends far beyond the time frame of the current Road Improvement District effort now underway. The proposed RID parkway is shown in the County's regional system plan as an integral element creating airport south access from SR 509. The problem is that absent certainty about completion of the regional system, particularly SR 509 to I-5, the RID parkway could wind up being an oversized access road to new commercial development only, and not south access to the airport. This in turn could create significant new traffic problems for the southeast airport area.

Throughout the past year, the Port has repeatedly advised both Winmar, the RID sponsor, and the County that there were potential problems posed by the timing inconsistencies between the RID and implementing the regional system plan. It appears that the RID process will put decisions in front of the Port which are premature.

It is our recommendation that Port commitments to a south access project, whether in the form of an RID as currently proposed or in some other manner, be linked to, or made dependent upon, the institutional commitments of the other government agencies involved to complete the regional transportation system plan by a date certain.

Unless commitments can be secured to insure that, upon its completion, the southern terminus of the RID would tie into the existing regional system, Port support would be premature. The Port has to avoid creating a road to nowhere, which the RID alone could become.

Recommended Port Commission Policy Direction on North SeaTac Park

On the basis of the preceding overview, it is recommended that the Commission authorize the staff to proceed with park negotiations with King County with policy direction establishing the Port's perspective. The following policies are recommended:

Park property subject to development should include those properties south to So. 142nd/144th Streets.

Agreements reached must recognize that park development, operations, and maintenance are the appropriate responsibility of the general purpose government responsible for the area, in this case King County.

Agreements reached should be based on a master property agreement which removes the Port from the provision of specific facilities or properties to parties other than King County.

Existing activities, services, types of facilities and uses provide substantial community benefit and are the result of significant community efforts. Their incorporation into a park plan and interlocal agreement among governing jurisdictions is essential.