

AVIATION COMMITTEE

GRAND JUNCTION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

Suggestions to City-County Airport Board For Future Development of Walker Field.

March 20, 1958

Introduction:

Since World War II, the advance in aviation has been so great that it has been difficult for all cities and counties to keep their airport facilities adequate to take care of the increased traffic and use. The problem in Grand Junction and Mesa County is no different than most communities of its size and larger, across the United States except for the fact in proportion to population, Walker Field is probably used more than any other airport in the country. The development of more adequate facilities at this field is, therefore, more urgent than in most localities.

The City Council and County Commissioners are to be congratulated on their forward attitude and thinking in connection with our local airport. The organization of a City-County Airport Board is certainly a step in the right direction as the next few years will of necessity see sizeable amounts of public funds spent in the development of our airport and its facilities. Close cooperation must be maintained between the two political subdivisions responsible for the airport. Bob Cheever in his capacity as Airport Manager should be commended on his sincere interest in the airport and its development. By being a private pilot, he is personally aware of many of the problems involved and the requirements desired, not only for the commercial airlines but those of the private and company pilot.

The Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce in submitting this report desires to cooperate with and assist in any way possible the public officials responsible for airport development. Much has previously been accomplished in this connection; however, a great deal remains to be done.

Phase 1:

This phase of development of Walker Field is practically complete. It consists of the reconstruction of Runway 11-29, 5400 feet in length; also, the installation of high intensity landing lights. At latest, this project should be completed by July 1. With good weather it would be possible to accomplish this May 1. The total cost of this project will be in the neighborhood of \$350,000 of which more than half will be paid by the Federal Government. Completion of this phase will permit United Airlines to again put Grand Junction back on its transcontinental airline system and the field can be used by most any heavy aircraft common use at the present time.

Phase 2:

This phase of planning by the City and County involves taxiways. Application has been made to the Federal Government for assistance funds during the fiscal year July 1, 1958 to June 30, 1959. Both the City and the County should arrange to include in their budget for the calendar year 1959 funds to match Federal funds in order that this very important project can be completed during the first six months of 1959. The inadequate taxiways at our present airport have been a disgrace to the community for many years. Much damage has been done to commercial and private aircraft and daily the lives of many people have been in danger because adequate taxiways have not been available. The estimated costs of Phase 2 are as follows:

	City-County Share	Fed. Gov't Share
Taxiways	100,976.00	115,154.00
Taxi Lights	8,676.00	9,894.00
Parking Apron	5,265.00	6,005.00
Wind T	<u>7,008.00</u>	<u>7,992.00</u>
	121,925.00	139,045.00

This estimated expense covers adequate taxiways along Runway 11-29 only.

Phase 3:

This phase of planning for the airport involves a new building in which to house all of the Government offices and a control tower for the airport. A new building to adequately house the Weather Bureau, CAA Communications, Grand Junction Radio, and tower facilities is urgently needed; however, this construction can be delayed until the fiscal year for the Federal Government of July 1, 1959 to June 30, 1960, and the calendar year of the City and County 1960. The cost of this building will be approximately \$150,000; more than half of which will be financed by the Federal Government. By moving the Government offices out of the present Administration Building, room will probably be available for an adequate restaurant and required airline ticketing and administration without additional capital investment by the City and County.

Phase 4:

This phase of planning involves the extension of Runway 11-29 to 7,500 feet. This is a very important phase of planning as jet aircraft and larger transport aircraft will require this length of runway at this altitude. Unless new financing is available, it will probably be necessary to delay this construction until the year 1961.

Taxiways:

Immediately on completion of Phase 1 or before, emergency measures should be taken to temporarily gravel the taxiway on Runway 11-29 from the Administration Building west to the end of the runway. This will permit the use of this taxiway by both private and commercial airplanes until Phase 2 can be completed. If this taxiway is not made practical to use by both commercial and private aircraft, we will continue to have a serious hazard to both property and public.

In the calendar year 1959, consideration should be given and funds budgeted for the graveling and possibly seal coating of taxiways along the north-south runway, more accurately called 22-4. The prevailing winds in this valley make the heavy traffic on Runway 11-29; however, when winds are such that the Runway 22-4 is required, all of the traffic is diverted to that runway, which necessitates the maintenance of adequate taxiways. The same hazard is present on this runway as described above in connection with the east-west runway. It is so important to make it possible to get airplanes off the runways immediately after their landing has been accomplished and provide a safe landing space for incoming traffic.

Maintenance:

Runway 22-4 at the present time is in fairly good condition. Proper maintenance of this runway should not be overlooked in the future. The base underneath the present surface is probably adequate for a good many years. The length of the runway is probably adequate because it is used much less than the east-west runway. After the completion of Runway 11-29, adequate funds should be yearly made available to properly maintain this runway.

Property Acquisition:

The City and County now own property sufficiently long to lay a 7,500 foot runway; however, in order to protect the glide path, immediate consideration should be given to acquiring additional property, extending westerly from the present runway 11-29. In a few years, it will probably be necessary that a 10,000 foot runway be provided for jet aircraft designed for commercial, military and private use. The airport will not only require property 10,000 feet in length but should have a mile or two on each end of the runway to provide safety in the glide path both for aircraft passengers and ground installations. Property in this general area is largely owned by the Bureau of Land Management and is very inexpensive property. This may not be the case in years to come.

Crash-strip:

Plans should be made to acquire land to provide crash strips on each end of our present paved areas of runways extending for 2000 to 3000 feet. If the interstate highway should be routed near the Airport, the land will become more expensive. Each jet landing and takeoff has required maximum performance from pilot and plane. Tires are blown in trying to stop on the present length runways. A "crash strip" will provide run out space after the ship has landed and some speed dissipated. The crash strip should be graded smooth and packed hard with a dirt top to handle aircraft with faulty landing gear, etc.

Water:

It is important that city water be piped to the airport. The total cost of this project will be approximately \$35,000. The City Water Dept. will pay a portion of this expense. The balance of probably \$20,000 will have to be taken from some airport appropriation; since funds have not been budgeted for this expense during the calendar year 1958, it will probably be necessary to delay until 1959; however, during this year both the City and County

should give serious consideration to including this item in their budget. It will be impossible to install restaurant facilities until water is available. Our community is seriously criticized by commercial and private air passengers deplaning and finding it almost impossible to buy a cup of coffee. Water is also required for fire protection, normal industrial use by airport facilities, and very necessary for landscaping which is greatly desired.

Landscaping:

Particularly in the summer time, the Grand Valley is a beautiful valley. An air passenger looking out of one window of an airplane approaching the valley sees this blanket of green; however, if he is sitting on the other side of the airplane, he does not see the green valley but the very dry desert and the barren face of the Bookcliffs. After his plane lands and he has an opportunity to step out of the plane and see nothing but dirt and rocks, he assumes that he is in the middle of the desert. To make this passenger feel welcome to our fertile valley, a small expanse of lawn, trees, and shrubbery should be planted at our airport just as soon as water is available.

Restaurant Facilities:

As indicated above, our community is criticized many times a day because food is not available at the airport of transient passengers. The number of employees at the airport seems to increase steadily, which also deserves consideration insofar as food service is concerned. Since this is dependent upon water, it makes the requirement for water even more important.

Tie-Down Area:

In the years 1956 and 1957, the Tie-down area for personal and business aircraft was greatly increased. At the time it seemed like ample facilities were available; however, they are crowded at the present time and in future years, the number of aircraft based at Walker Field will undoubtedly increase many times which will require much additional space for tie-down and T-hangars. Consideration should be given to where this area should best be located and made ready when required.

Hangar Facilities:

When the runway is lengthened to 7,500 feet, Grand Junction will be an ideal operating field for several cargo airlines. It is possible that the headquarters for a passenger airline could be based at Grand Junction; however, in order to properly service large commercial aircraft, it is necessary that a very large hangar and facilities to completely service this type of equipment be made available, either through City-County owned or commercially owned and operated facilities. The number of employees required by either or both the cargo and passenger operations would greatly add to the general economy of our community. Serious consideration should continually be given to large hangar facilities.

Fire Fighting Equipment:

Consideration should be given to purchasing fire-fighting equipment and providing adequate storage facilities for this equipment. Personnel to operate such equipment could very easily be

trained and maintained on a voluntary basis. There are enough employees at the airport at the present time to man a voluntary fire department. Training for such personnel could be periodically given by the Air Force School at Lowry Field. This equipment should be managed by the Grand Junction City Fire Dept., who would probably dispatch men to the airport in case of fire or emergency. While these men are enroute, the volunteer fire department could be in action.

Radio and Landing Equipment:

Consideration should constantly be given to encourage the CAA to make installation of the latest radio and landing service equipment. This has been true in the past and the local CAA Communications Office has done an excellent job. The present ILS equipment which came very nearly being decommissioned a year or so ago should definitely be kept in service and continually improved. It is possible that with additional traffic ground control approach (GCA) should be added to the present ILS equipment. Grand Junction is located on Airway Victor 8, which is one of the busiest transcontinental airways.

Auxiliary Landing Field:

Since the nearest Air Force Fields are located in Denver, Colorado Springs, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas, Grand Junction is in the center of a vast area with no adequate auxiliary landing fields for jet and heavy military aircraft. It is possible that funds might be available to increasing the facilities at Walker Field by encouraging its use as an auxiliary field for military aircraft. This is also a very logical place for the installation of an Air National Guard facility.

Highway:

The City and Regional Planning Commissions have given some consideration to a new highway connecting the airport with the center of town, and feeder roads to other parts of the county. This highway would roughly follow the ravine just north of Patterson Road and First or Seventh Streets in a relatively direct line to the present airport administration building. Since property values near the Bookcliff Country Club are increasing rather rapidly, consideration should be given to purchasing right-of-way for the much needed highway. If possible, actual construction of the project should be accomplished in 1959 or at latest, 1960.

Economic Importance of Walker Field

At present 77 individuals are employed at Walker Field, having an estimated annual payroll of \$424,000.00. Annual expenditures by companies operating at the airport are estimated at \$573,500.00, not including Frontier Airlines gasoline account and purchase of aircraft. Private and corporate investment in equipment, excluding aircraft, at the airport is over \$350,000.00. City, County, C.A.A. and other Federal agencies operation at the airport would account for capital expenditures of several times this amount.

Use of Airport:

There are 85 locally based private aircraft now at Walker Field. In addition to these planes, the field is regularly used by numerous twin-engined aircraft owned and operated by such companies as: California Co., Vanadium Corp. of America, Pure Oil, Pacific Northwest Pipelines Co., Union Oil Co., Utah Construction Co., Gunnison Mining Co., Sun Oil Co., Ringsby Truck Lines, Eaton Metal Products Co., Barber Oil Co., Standard Oil Co., Shell Oil Co., Superior Oil Co., Phillips Petroleum Co., General Petroleum Co., Texas Co., Vest Aircraft Co., Clinton Aviation, Inc., Combs Aircraft Co., Mountain States Construction Co., Malco Refineries, Utex Exploration Co., Peter Kiewit Construction Co., El Paso Natural Gas Co., Isbell Construction Co., McCoy Co., Keeny Charter Service, and Cannon Drilling Co.

Present annual volume of take-offs and landings are estimated as follows:

Frontier Airlines	6,510
Charter Flights	3,000
Student Flights	4,320
Locally based	
Private Aircraft,	9,580
Transient Aircraft,	
(Twin or larger)	1,460
(Single Engine)	<u>7,130</u>
	<u>32,000</u>

It is estimated that over 135,000 persons are involved in this traffic.

Temporary Control-Tower:

The volume of traffic at Walker Field at the present time more than justifies a control tower and immediate action should be taken to establish a control tower on some temporary basis. The criteria for control towers operated by C.A.A. at present is set at a minimum of 24,000 landings and take-offs per year. The CAA will furnish the personnel for this operation; however, it will be necessary for the City and County to provide a suitable room, the cost of which would probably be less than \$5,000. Safety to the passengers and pilots daily using our airport should certainly justify this expense immediately.

Revenue to the City and County:

1957	Gasoline Sales @ 2¢ per gal.	\$ 4,676.78
	Frontier Airlines	3,967.58
	57 Cab Rental	2,893.24
	Monarch Aviation	6,600.00
	Weather Bureau	987.00
	C.A.A.	2,105.78
	Insurance, Commissions	201.28
	Avis Car Rental	107.39
	Miscellaneous	<u>653.46</u>
		%22,192.51

From now on, the revenue of the airport should be expected to pay operating expenses. This revenue should greatly increase as more facilities are available and traffic and use increase.

Gas Service:

Since natural gas service is being extended to rural areas of the county by the Public Service Co., encouragement should be given to them to extend lines to the airport as soon as economically feasible.

Air-Freight Traffic Potential:

Additional runway length will make Grand Junction a desirable refueling point for air-freight runs which in turn would substantially increase the revenue of Walker Field to the City-County. Refueling of west-bound flights on the west side of the Continental Divide is highly desirable for obvious economic reasons. Long freight runs could also use the less congested air traffic area for refueling. Longer runways would also allow full passenger loads on hot days, whereas payload in the past had to be limited to less than full seating capacity due to excessive runway temperature relative to runway length and altitude.

SUMMARY:

1958

1. Encourage contractors to complete Phase 1 as soon as possible.
2. Include in 1959 budget sufficient funds to complete Phase 2.
3. Install temporary control tower facilities.
4. Gravel and seal-cote temporary taxiways along complete runway 11-29.
5. Maintain runways and other facilities and see that budget of future years contains adequate funds for continuing maintenance program.
6. Investigate and start program to acquire sufficient land for adequate future runways, crash-strips, and glide paths.
7. Investigate and start program to acquire right-of-way for highway to and from city and other parts of the county.
8. Make plans to serve airport with city water and natural gas.
9. See that temporary food service is made available.
10. Set up fire fighting equipment that has been purchased by county and train voluntary personnel to assist Fire Dept. crew.
11. Establish proper liaison between City-County Airport Board and C.A.A. to assure best possible equipment for Walker Field and surrounding area.
12. Encourage Armed Forces and Air National Guard to use this airport and assist financially in improving the facilities in order that they can use it for emergency and possibly active use.

1959

1. Design building and include in 1960 budget funds to construct building for Weather Bureau, CAA Communications, Control Tower and other government facilities.

2. Make plans and budget funds for graveling and seal-coating taxiways along runway 22-4.
3. Landscape area around Administration Building.
4. Make plans for increasing size of tie-down area and additional hangars for private aircraft.
5. Make plans for large hangars for cargo, passenger, and military jet and multi-engine aircraft.
6. Purchase or otherwise acquire adequate land for future extension of runways, crash strips and to protect glide path from obstructions.
7. Construct highway to airport.

1960

1. By lease or other means see that adequate restaurant facilities are installed in Administration Building.
2. Include in budget for 1961 adequate funds to complete Phase 4.
3. Continue to improve facilities and equipment at the airport, as this is the focal point for transportation of people and cargo, that are essential to the economic growth of this city and county.