AIRPORT COMMISSION WORKSHOP
Friday, May 26, 2023, 11:00 pm
Murfreesboro Municipal Airport Business Center
1930 Memorial Blvd. Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance: Council Member Bill Shacklett

AGENDA

1. Call to order – Attendance
2. Introduction - Purpose of Workshop
3. MTSU relocation timeline
4. Update on Airport Pavement Rehab and Approach Management Projects
5. Update on Fuel Farm Project and Aviation Fuel Provider RFCSP
6. Update on development hangar pads and Taxiways E and F
7. Update on Standard Operating Procedures, operations forecast, and results from benefit cost analysis for proposed application for FAA Contract Tower
8. Period for comments, concerns, questions
9. Next scheduled Airport Commission meeting -June 17, 2023 (Consider July 19, 2023 instead)
10. Adjourn

2. Introduction
   Purpose of the Airport Commission Workshop
   Major changes that have occurred at the Murfreesboro Municipal Airport and will continue to occur in the next five years. MTSU Pro-pilot program has experienced tremendous growth and is in the process of relocating its program along with the aircraft maintenance labs to be able to achieve the vision the University has for the program. The FAA, State, and City have all invested millions in the airport. The Murfreesboro Airport is an economic benefit generator for the community. With a major tenant change and most importantly use, the City of Murfreesboro and the Murfreesboro Airport Commission must do some careful, strategic planning to make certain the airport is in a good position to generate revenue and serve the community.

   The purpose of this Workshop is to agree on a direction to move forward with a number of projects that will occur over the next five years. This will assist with the development of the next Airport Layout Plan (ALP)

3. MTSU relocation timeline
   The relocation of the MTSU pro-pilot program and aircraft maintenance lab will occur in phases over the next three to five years. The term of the MTSU Master Lease Agreement will expire in 2031.

4. Update on Airport Pavement Rehab and Approach Management Projects
   Chad Gehrke and Benson Hadley will be presenting the latest information regarding the Airport Pavement Rehab Project. Benson Hadley will also be sharing the latest information about the Approach Management project. He will describe how that project may be managed and the question as to how this project will be funded.

5. Update on the Fuel Farm Project and Aviation Fuel Provider RFCSP.
   Chad Gehrke will present the latest information regarding the construction of the fuel farm pad. Ryan Hulsey will present the latest information about the Aviation Fuel Provider and Equipment RFCSP.

6. Update on the development of hangar pads and Taxiway E and F.
   Chad Gehrke will present the latest information regarding the development of hangar pads and Taxiways E and F. The development of the northern end of the airport is key to generating revenue that can be used to assist with the cost of other improvements and maintenance.

7. Update on Standard Operating Procedures, operations forecasts, and results from benefit cost analysis for proposed application to participate in FAA Contract Tower program.
   Chad Gehrke will discuss the observations and data collected from Virtower and MTSU safety reports. He will describe the limitations of the Standard Operating Procedures and remaining concerns that exist now and in the future.

   Dr. Dave Byers will share the results of the forecasts that he ran and their methodology. He will also describe the results of those various scenarios when applied to the benefit cost analysis. He will report the findings of the benefit cost analysis and whether or not the Murfreesboro Airport would be a good candidate for the FAA Contract Tower program. A draft info paper is attached.

8. Period for comments, concerns, questions from Airport Commission Members and guests.

Recommendation from the Air Traffic Control Tower Feasibility Study

City Staff has contracted with Quadrex Aviation as consultants to provide a feasibility analysis to determine if the City of Murfreesboro would be eligible to participate in the FAA's Federal Contract Air Traffic Control Tower (FCT) Program.

The purpose for this study was based on the following:

1) The volume of aircraft operations, particularly during peak hours, warranted at the very least a consideration of participating in the FAA FCT program as a means to enhance airfield and airspace safety and efficiency.
2) While the Standard Operating Procedures have significantly improved the efficiency of traffic pattern operations, issues still occur several times a week.
3) The Airport has acquired a reputation for having a very crowded pattern which deter a good portion of corporate pilots from wanting to operate at the Murfreesboro Airport. Nashville Air Traffic Controllers, when talking to pilots entering the Murfreesboro airspace, refer to Murfreesboro as "the beehive" and often conclude their radio transmission with a pilot with "good luck" because of the number of aircraft in and around the pattern.

As the City of Murfreesboro and the Murfreesboro Municipal Airport prepares for the MTSU relocation and positions itself to provide space for other types of aeronautical activities, addressing the pattern is a necessity for ensure any success.

The benefits of an airport with an air traffic control tower are:

1) Safety among all airport users is paramount. Management of the pattern/airspace and ground operations by not allowing air traffic to get to the point that runway or airspace capacity is compromised.
2) Assist in maintaining separation and sequencing of aircraft arriving and departing the Airport .
3) Corporate pilots prefer towered airports over a non-towered airport.

The Feasibility Study demonstrated using a variety of scenarios (including the relocation of a substantial portion of MTSU's flight training activities) that in each case, the ratio between the benefits (safety) vs the operational costs to operate a control tower would be greater than the requisite 1.0 qualifying score to be accepted by the FAA as a candidate for the FCT program.

If the FAA accepts the City of Murfreesboro into the program, the FAA will reimburse the City for 90% of the cost of the construction of the tower and associated studies and engineering costs. The FAA would be responsible for hiring, pay, and benefit package for the air traffic controllers. An estimated cost to construct an air traffic control tower today is $8 million.

The City would be responsible for maintaining the building and the cost of the maintenance and repair of the radios and other specialized equipment in the tower which is estimated to range between $40-60,000 annually.

In reviewing a long list of communities that currently participate in the FAA Contract Air Traffic Control Tower Program, Murfreesboro sits well among cities with similar or greater populations. The number of aircraft operations recorded over the last two years puts Murfreesboro well within the middle of the list.

Many of the communities listed also have well-known collegiate aviation programs in line with what Murfreesboro has.

The economic benefit of air traffic control services for Murfreesboro would be significant. An air traffic control tower would bring in five or six full time, high paying, federal jobs into the local economy. The Murfreesboro Municipal Airport would be an attractive airport to base corporate style aircraft and transient pilots, previously hesitant to operate here, would be more willing to utilize our airport knowing that they would have controlled airspace to operate in. These types of users and aeronautical activities are currently not attracted to Murfreesboro due to the heavy flight training activity. It is my hope that the Airport could play a part in attracting a corporate headquarters to our City or other opportunities that would further assist in boosting our local economy. To do that, the City and Airport have to address the pattern capacity issues and other corporate pilot concerns. With the new Terminal and other improvements already in place, air traffic control services would be that next step.

A few thoughts about the MTSU Aerospace Department Flight Training and Aircraft Maintenance Labs relocation as it pertains to the pursuit of air traffic control services:

1) The full MTSU relocation may take three to five years to complete.
2) Even after MTSU has completely relocated, they will continue to conduct flight training operations at Murfreesboro.
3) MTSU is currently purchasing aircraft and have forecasted to purchase more aircraft in the future brining the total number of aircraft to a fleet of 50 to 60 aircraft. The University is touting that they have the third largest collegiate aviation program in the nation.
4) In our efforts in 2020 and 2021 to address the pilot complaints, runway capacity issues, and citizen complaints the City of Murfreesboro contracted with a nationally recognized consultant to assist in the creation of Standard Operating Procedures. The City learned through that process how the FAA Grant Assurances limit the City's authority to address safety and efficiency concerns and that the Standard Operating Procedures cannot by themselves address all the issues that continue to occur in the pattern.
5) A major concern is that when MTSU is not based at Murfreesboro and there will be no faculty and staff members monitoring operations here, the Standard Operating Procedures will not be followed as they are today. This is what is currently being reported at the neighboring airports. If Murfreesboro wants to be successful in managing the airspace and being more open to other aeronautical activities, an air traffic control tower is the only way to ensure that can occur.

City Staff is scheduling meetings with the Airport Commission to present this information and receive their recommendation to be presented to City Council.