

OLYMPIA REGIONAL AIRPORT MASTER PLAN UPDATE FACT SHEET

1. Is the Port of Olympia trying to expand the airport to alleviate SEA-TAC airport traffic?

The port of Olympia is **not** trying to expand the Olympia Regional Airport (OLM) to alleviate Sea-Tac airport traffic nor traffic from any other airport. Neither Port representatives, nor the Airport Master Plan Update (AMPU) itself, state a desire to pursue such a path. The Port is also **not** pursuing, or investing in, a “build it and they will come” plan of action, nothing to this idea is stated in the AMPU nor has that message been communicated by Port representatives.

The only thing the AMPU does in regard to commercial air traffic is assess the feasibility of commercial service at the airport. This is in fact identified in Vision 2050 as something the community is interested in seeing.

That feasibility analysis can be found in Appendix, 4-1 of the AMPU. However, we note that commercial service is assessed not as a reliever airport to SEA-TAC. The intent of the appendix is to explore whether commercial service is even feasible based on local population, expected population growth, potential customer base, hypothetical destination flight demand, estimated airline interest, and many other factors.

While the appendix also references the work completed by the Washington State directed Commercial Aviation Coordination Commission (CACC) to look at airports that could be overflow for SeaTac, we note Appendix 4-1 clarified intentions by stating “***OLM is extremely unlikely to become a major commercial hub... this study finds it extremely unlikely and infeasible that OLM is an option to fill this need.***”

While various scenarios were evaluated for the purpose of the feasibility study, the most feasible outcome, based on current conditions and forecast, is depicted in Table A-9 of the appendix. The table includes regional jet as well as light transport and electric or hybrid commercial aircraft, however, forecasted use of electric and hybrid aircraft are hypothetical at this time as these aircraft have not yet entered the industry. For regional jet aircraft already in use in the industry, the Table depicts by 2040 a regional jet aircraft, up to 78 seats, could conceptually offer up to 8 daily operations (landing or take-off) per day and serve up to 436 passengers per day. For further information, other sections of the feasibility study explain in detail what major hurdles would need to be overcome for this to occur.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In 2019 the **Commercial Aviation Coordination Commission (CACC)** was created by the Washington State legislature with the purpose of identifying potential

sites to alleviate commercial air traffic from SEA-TAC Airport. One variable for identifying a potential site was whether the local leadership and surrounding community would support such a project. Based heavily on this variable, the Olympia Regional Airport was ruled out for being a potential option for this CACC objective. The final report (link below), prepared in June 2023, confirms this by acknowledging only one airport, Yakima (not OLM), as interested in being part of the CACC's solution. **The leadership of the various Thurston County communities, and the Port, heard the desires of the community** and did not support the CACC's objective.

[Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission Final Report - June 2023](#)

2. When is/was the public able to comment during this master plan process?

The master plan update included significant community involvement during the first 18 months of the master planning process. For FAA guided master plans, which are different than other types of master plans, the community engagement process is most crucial during the early stages to ensure community input is solicited to influence the alternative development considerations that will be pursued. More details on this subject can be found in FAA advisory circular 150/5070-6B. Below are the dates of the various meetings that were made available for public participation and input, both in-person and online, during the planning process:

- a. Public Open House meetings (online attendance was available as an option)
 - i. Public Open House #1 – September 27, 2021
 - ii. Public Open House #2 – February 17, 2022
 - iii. Public Open House #3 – May 26, 2022
 - iv. Public Open House #4 – October 12, 2022
 - v. Public “Conversation with the Airport Manager” #5 – January 18, 2023
- b. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings open to the public (Online attendance was available as an option). The TAC included members from airport businesses, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Department of Natural resources (DNR), Thurston Regional Planning Council, City of Tumwater, City of Olympia, and Port of Olympia Citizens Advisory Council (POCAC).
 - i. Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #1 – May 20, 2021
 - ii. Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #2 – July 15, 2021
 - iii. Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #3 – December 16, 2021
 - iv. Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #4 – March 10, 2022
- c. Commission presentations during public commission meetings (online attendance was available as an option)
 - i. Presentation – October 17, 2022
 - ii. Presentation – February 21, 2023
- d. Also, a full history of the 2021-2022 public engagement activities and meeting materials may be found on the Port website <https://airport.portolympia.com/airport-master-plan>, in the Public Outreach section.

3. Why are residential neighborhoods and the Airport close together?

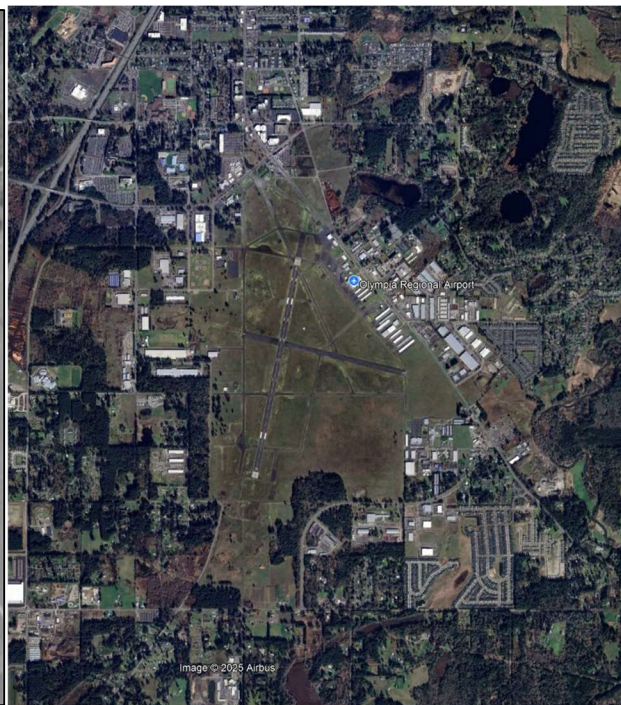
The airport was built in 1928, nearly 100 years ago, after the Olympia Chamber of Commerce purchased the site for the purpose of building an airfield. During the 1940's the airport was used as an auxiliary location for the army's McChord airfield. In 1947 the airport was given back to the City of Olympia, which operated the airport until 1963 when the airport was then turned over to the Port of Olympia. Much of the development surrounding the airport came many decades after the airport was built. For additional information on the history of the airport, please see [Flying High: A History Of The Olympia Airport - ThurstonTalk](#)

Below are images from 1941 and 2024 showing how the rural lands surrounding the airport have changed over time as commerce and residential housing continue to be built closer to the nearly 100-year-old airport. It is strongly encouraged that buyers research the community, amenities, and city growth plans prior to purchasing property to ensure the community is compatible with the buyer's objectives. Access to the City of Tumwater zoning map for the urban growth area can be found here: [Tumwater Zoning Map](#). Community members are encouraged to share their thoughts with the City of Tumwater, the zoning authority, regarding zoning decisions surrounding the airport.

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2024



4. Can the Port limit the number of aircraft operations (landing or take-off) and stop loud aircraft from operating at OLM?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controls all airspace in the United States, including airspace above airports. The Port does not have the legal authority to regulate the airspace or to discriminate against certain types of aircraft nor do we have the authority to

Creating economic opportunities and building community for all of Thurston County through responsible resource use.

Commissioners | Amy Harding | Bob Iyall | Sarah Montano | Maggie Sanders | Jasmine Vasavada

limit how many aircraft can operate at OLM. FAA grant assurance #22a, relating to public use airports states: An Airport Sponsor (owner) “...will make the airport available as an airport for public use on reasonable terms and without unjust discrimination to all types, kinds and classes of aeronautical activities, including commercial aeronautical activities offering services to the public at the airport...”

The Olympia Regional Airport cares about our community and is sympathetic to the concerns surrounding airport noise. OLM has implemented voluntary noise abatement procedures published on our website that we encourage pilots to use to minimize the impact of aircraft noise on the surrounding community. The link to these procedures is found here: [OLYMPIA AIRPORT NOISE ABATEMENT PROCEDURES](#)

For members of the public who would like to share their noise concerns with the FAA, as the regulating agency, please use the following FAA link:

<https://noise.faa.gov/noise/pages/noise.html>

For members of the public who have concerns regarding noise from military aircraft, please use the following link so your concerns may be heard by the military:

<https://home.army.mil/lewis-mcchord/index.php/my-Joint-Base-Lewis-Mcchord/all-services/noise-and-public-disturbances>

5. Who benefits from having an airport in Thurston County?

Nearly every person in Thurston County is enriched by the presence of airports across the country. If you’ve flown for leisure or to see loved ones, received a FedEx or UPS package, or had a loved one transported by helicopter to a hospital, you’ve been touched by an airport. In light of growing concerns over global warming, aerial firefighting operations supported by airports are also a significant benefit to everyone. There are truly too many direct and indirect ways we benefit from airports to summarize here, including access to some of the food and products we purchase in local stores.

While the Olympia Regional Airport does not have commercial passenger service or cargo operations, our locally based flight schools provide career training pathways for our aspiring youth who may become future professional pilots operating aircraft to fly your family to see loved ones, fight forest fires, transport your packages, provide life-saving medical flights, or even train to serve in our armed forces. These flight schools provide career training opportunities for livable wage jobs that add value and service to our community and country. The presence of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the airfield brings comfort to many knowing that aerial firefighting resources are only minutes away. The ability for DNR to respond quickly to fires helps minimize threats from fire damage to forests, animal habitats, homes and businesses, protecting our quality of life and in some cases our lives. Demonstrating the value of aerial firefighting services, in 2024, 96% of the fires in Washington State were restricted to 10-acres, or less, due to DNR’s ability to respond with aerial firefighting aircraft.

Additionally, the Washington State Patrol aviation division operates from OLM providing essential public safety operations and serves the seat of our state government. According to a 2018 WSDOT study OLM supports, directly and indirectly, at least 523 jobs,

\$105,974,000 in economic impact annually, and \$1,296,020 in annual tax revenue. Additionally, OLM provides valuable space for local emergency service agencies to conduct invaluable training exercises, helping provide the best services to the community. The Olympia Regional Airport is a base of operations for emergency services, jobs, career pathway training, local business revenue, tax revenue, and much more. This nearly century old airport is an anchor for business and economic activity in Thurston County and provides many services that benefit all our aviation and non-aviation friends in the community.

6. Does all aviation fuel contain lead?

No. Jet fuel that is used by all jets and turbo-prop aircraft does not contain lead. Lead is found in 100LL (LL stands for low lead) aircraft fuel used by piston engines found mostly in small general aviation aircraft. In 2022 the FAA approved a fleetwide supplementary type certificate (STC) for a lead free piston engine fuel produced by GAMI. Since then, two other fuel producers have produced lead-free fuel alternatives. While this is very exciting news, it is also brand-new technology and will take some time before it is available industry wide. The Port is monitoring these efforts very closely and will take steps to bring unleaded fuel to OLM as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

For context: 100LL fuel sales nationwide represents about one-third of one percent of all gasoline sales in the United States. (aopa.org)

7. Is there airport related public health risks from air pollution, lead, and noise?

The port takes the health and safety of the community very seriously. The Port is very careful to ensure its business practices are in compliance with all federal, state and local environmental laws and regulations. While the Port, along with the entire aviation industry, seeks to move away from leaded fuels as quickly as possible, it must be accomplished in a safe and responsible way. The Port supports moving away from leaded fuels as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so. While there are now alternative fuels available, there are still many hurdles that must be overcome before we can safely bring these options to OLM. As appropriate, the Port will conduct air quality and noise evaluations as required by state and federal law.

8. Why do an airport master plan?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) determines when airports like ours that are part of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) must complete a master plan or master plan update (AMPU). On average, these airports need to complete a master plan or AMPU every 7-10 years. The Olympia Regional Airport (OLM) started a new AMPU in 2021, as directed by the FAA, because the airport's previous master plan update was completed in 2013.

9. Why is the Master plan update called a 2021 master plan update when we are in 2025?

The practice in the aviation industry is to tie the date/year of the AMPU, to the year the project started, which is also most often the year FAA grant funding was received for the project. For OLM, 2021 is the year the FAA grant was awarded as well as the year the project

began. On average master plan updates take 2-4 years to complete, depending on their complexity.

10. Why is the Port trying to adopt a master plan update before a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is adopted?

The FAA funded master plan update is an entirely separate planning project from the habitat conservation plan. The two projects are not connected financially or by regulation. However, it is important to note that AMPU-identified development projects planned for areas that currently serve as habitat for protected species will not move forward without an adopted HCP or other form of Endangered Species Act consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Also important to note, the Port's future adopted HCP, and its actions, must support the USFWS's overall plan for species recovery. The Port is a partner with USFWS and WDFW for the research and recovery of protected species. This is evidenced by the Port's voluntary actions, for more than a decade, inviting USFWS and WDFW to conduct surveys on the airport to gather valuable research on the species to help develop ways to support their recovery.

11. Is the runway being extended as part of this master plan update?

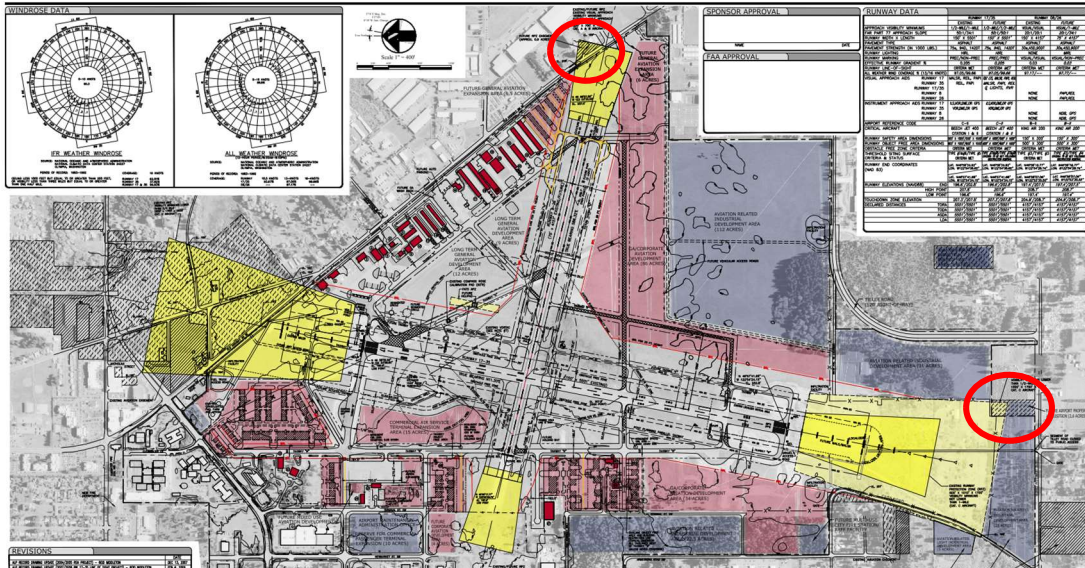
No. The Port has no plans to extend either runway and, therefore, the AMPU preferred alternative development plan, shown in Chapters 4 and 5, show **no runway extension**. The commercial service feasibility study (Appendix 4-1) discusses necessary runway lengths for certain types of aircraft; however, this analysis was completed as part of the feasibility analysis process only and should not be mis-construed as Port plans or intentions. In fact, the master plan update calls for reducing the crosswind runway (8/26) length by 647 feet.

12. Are there plans to strengthen the main runway to support larger aircraft?

No. Neither the master plan update, nor the Port, have plans during this twenty-year planning period to strengthen the runway to support heavier aircraft.

13. Is any expansion, defined as land acquisition, planned for the airport?

The airport does not plan to expand its land footprint for the purpose of increasing airport operations. There are only two parcels the airport would consider purchasing should they become available in the future. In both cases, the .9-acre parcel east of runway 26 and the 2.6-acre parcel south of runway 35 would be purchased to provide improved operational safety by protecting the remaining portion of the runway protection zone (RPZ) for both runway ends. These parcels, if acquired, would **not** be used for development. These parcels would remain, or become, an area of level soil and short native vegetation. Please see the shaded area, circled in red, at the top and right side of diagram below for locations of referenced parcels. Image is from the 2013 master plan.



14. Is expansion, defined as an increase in air traffic, planned for the airport?

The Port is required by FAA regulations to support aeronautical activity indiscriminately. FAA grant #22a, referencing public use airport owners, states “It will make the airport available as an airport for public use on reasonable terms and without unjust discrimination to all types, kinds and classes of aeronautical activities, including commercial aeronautical activities offering services to the public at the airport.” Therefore, the number of aircraft operations (arrival or departure) that occur at OLM is based on aeronautical demand and by the design limitations of airport infrastructure. Airports operational limits are set by the FAA based on design and safety standards as outlined in FAA advisory circular 150/5060-5. While OLM has a design and safety limitation of approximately 630 daily operations, our current, and 20-year forecast, operations fall well below. In 2020, the forecast for annual aircraft operations was 70,466, or an average of 193 daily operations. However, actual annual aircraft operations for 2020 were only 64,816, an average of 178 daily operations. By 2040, the forecast aircraft operations is 84,665 annually, or 232 daily operations. Based on the forecast operations, this reflects about 1% annual growth in annual aircraft operations over the twenty-year forecast period. This is in line with the Thurston County population growth forecast published by the Thurston Regional Planning Council. Here is a link to this report: <https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/6931>

IMPORTANT REMINDER: 630 daily operations are the maximum operations allowed based on FAA safety and design standards. **630** daily operations **are not** the Port’s goal for daily operations at OLM.

15. Is the Port planning to increase flights to 630 per day (230,000 annually)

No. 630 operations are not the Port’s “expansion” goal. 630 operations are a theoretical number derived from an FAA calculation found in advisory circular 150/5060-5, which is used to identify an airport’s maximum capacity based on infrastructure design limitations and safety. It is **not** calculated because of a Port specified goal. This FAA guided

calculation produced a maximum operational limit (FAA term: annual service volume (ASV)) of 230,000 annual operations. This number, divided by 365 days in a year, results in an operational design limitation of approximately 630 daily operations. Again, this is a FAA design calculation for operational safety, it is not a Port of Olympia goal.

16. Does the Port want to remove the historic Meeker Oak tree?

No. The Meeker Oak Tree located in the City of Tumwater right-of-way along Old Highway 99 does not impact the airport's operations in a way that necessitates its removal. Some members of the public observed in the 2013 master plan update that the oak tree was identified as a vertical airspace obstruction and voiced concern as to whether the airport was trying to remove the oak tree due to its "obstruction" status with the FAA. While the historic oak tree is identified as a vertical airspace obstruction, it is also located immediately east of an airport hangar which also carries historic status. The location of the meeker oak tree, situated behind the historic hangar, does not necessitate its removal. Neither the FAA, nor the Port, are requiring or pursuing the removal of either historic structure.

17. Are the claims and statements on the www.stopolyairportgrowth.org website true?

While we respect the diverse opinions within the community regarding the Port and Olympia Regional Airport, we believe that some of the information presented on the website does not accurately reflect the Port's stance, practices, or future plans for the airport. We strongly encourage the public to seek a clear and factual understanding of the airport's operations and future plans by directly contacting the airport manager. The manager is available to arrange phone calls or in-person meetings to provide reliable data and clarify any questions. Recent misperceptions, shared widely on social media in the past month, have sparked unnecessary fear and concern among some residents. This fact sheet is part of our ongoing effort to provide accurate, up-to-date information and help counter the misleading narratives circulating in the community.