

**Memo**

To: Chair Westman, Senate Committee on Transportation  
Date: April 7, 2025  
From: Evan Robinson, Aviation Program Manager, Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development  
Re: Follow-up to Aviation Budget presentation 3/19

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The purpose of this memo is to provide follow-up answers to questions arising during the Agency's presentation of the Aviation budget.

**Replacement of Federal with State funds**

Aviation – TSA services are required at airports providing essential air scheduled (EAS) passenger service such as the service provided in Rutland by Cape Air. VTrans received a grant for \$65,000 in prior years and had to match this funding with an additional \$65,000 for each year of service. Through the recent FAA reauthorization bill the grant program for these funds was eliminated. Going forward, the Agency plans to include coverage of this fee in the requirements for the RFP for EAS. Vermont EAS services had already been bid when the changes under reauthorization came into effect, as a result the Agency will have to pay the full cost (\$130,000) for the TSA services until the next time the EAS contract is bid, which will be in the Fall, 2027. Airlines bidding to provide EAS service are eligible for federal funding under the EAS program and can include these services in their budget to be approved by FAA, which will remove any liability from the Agency to cover this cost.

The most recent example of the Agency replacing federal funds with State funds are the DC fast charging projects in Wilmington and Randolph, locations identified in Vermont's National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plans. These contracts previously included NEVI funds, but after the suspension of the NEVI program nationally by the federal administration, the Agency moved quickly to amend these contracts through the exclusive use of state general funds which were authorized for that purpose.

No other projects have had federal funds replaced with state funds.

**Franklin County Field Days**

AOT, Agency of Agriculture and Agency of Commerce and Community Development have been working with FCFD on the challenge of finding them a new location. Negotiations are underway with Jim Harrison for property he owns that abuts the current site. The 2024 event was the final one approved by the FAA for use of the airport property. FCFD signed an agreement with VTrans for this to be the final event, with removal of their infrastructure by 7/31/25. We have participated in a variety of meetings with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation to find them a new location and funding to make this transition. We remain engaged and ready to assist as we are able.

## **Airport Runway Extensions & Business Development**

Projects are ongoing.

Franklin Country State Airport (FSO) has seen immense capital improvements over the past several years:

- In 2023, the full length (3001') runway was completely reconstructed, and the width of the runway was increased to 75'.
- In 2024, VTrans and contractors facilitated the completion of a 1000-foot runway extension to the south, increasing the total length of the runway to 4001'. The runway extension allows larger aircraft to utilize the facility. The airport also upgraded its runway and taxiway lighting systems. Additional 2024 improvements include a 2000' parallel taxiway to the south for aircraft to safely access and exit the runway surface, improved drainage, a new electrical vault and improved radio functionality.
- Looking ahead, the parallel taxiway to the North is scheduled to be constructed in 2027. VTrans has completed a Master Hangar Partial-Permitting effort for the Franklin County Airport. The purpose of this effort was to streamline the airport development process by obtaining operational stormwater permits and partial Act-250 findings for viable locations and pre-determined acceptable building footprints. VTrans is supporting the town of Highgate through a \$1.0 million grant and right of way use to bring town water and sewer utilities to the airport and adjacent properties. This utility expansion will benefit future development at Franklin County Airport and abutting property in Highgate. It will also prepare the town for the next phase of the installation to bring water and sewer further east along Route 78.

## **Statewide Fuel Sales FY 24**

Airport	Town	Jet A (gal)	100LL (gal)	Fiscal Year	Owner	AOT Net Revenue	Operator	Notes
Franklin County	Highgate	790	20300	24	AOT		Border Air	
NEK International	Coventry	37450	25400	24	AOT		Lakeview Aviation	
E.F. Knapp	Berlin	43300	13000	24	AOT		VT Flying Service	
Hartness	Springfield	52400	9600	24	AOT		Springfield Aviation	
William H. Morse	Bennington	3172	8353	24	AOT		Hildt Aviation	
Rutland/Southern VT. Regional	N. Clarendon	116143	59022	24	Modern Aviation		Modern Aviation	Property leased from AOT
Morrisville/Stowe	Morristown	4000	14000	24	AOT	\$35,300	AOT	
Middlebury	E. Middlebury	N/A	18592	22	AOT	\$33,279	AOT	Out of Service April, 2023
Caledonia County	Lyndon	N/A	5200	23	AOT	\$9,308	AOT	Out of Service April, 2024
John H. Boylan	Island Pond	N/A	N/A					No Fuel Available
<b>Total Gallons</b>		257255	173467					
<b>Estimated Tax Revenue</b>		\$ 79,491.80	\$ 53,601					
Based on Average Tax Rate \$.039/Gal								

The table above represents the total fuel sold in FY 24 for most VTrans owned airports.

Six of AOT's airports have a Fixed Base Operator (on-airport business) that provides the fueling service and collects revenue from the fuel. At the airports where there is not an FBO, AOT collects the revenue from those fuel farms. As noted, the Middlebury Airport fuel farm was decommissioned in April 2023, so the numbers included are for FY 22. Similarly in Caledonia, we have fuel sales for FY23, as that fuel farm was decommissioned in April 2024.

## **Aviation Economic Impact Related to Financial Status of Visiting Pilots**

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce was contacted to try and determine the economic impact related to visiting pilots based on their financial status. VT Chamber of Commerce fielded the request and reached out the Vermont Futures Project. The Vermont Futures Project was not able to identify any existing data to track the economic impact of wealthy pilots using Vermont's airports, but there is a consensus that it does provide a positive impact.

In August 2021, VTrans published an economic impact study that outlines The Vermont Airport System's contributions to the Vermont economy. A brief summation of important contributions are as follows:

- **Jobs:** The statewide estimate of direct airport business and employer employment totaled 3,457 full-time equivalent jobs at Vermont airports.
- **Average Annual Capital Expenditures:** On an annual statewide basis, approximately \$18.5 million in capital development is spent at all Vermont airports.
- **Annual Visitor Spending:** Annual visitor spending for Vermont airports totaled almost \$127.2 million.
- **Total Taxes Paid:** Economic activity associated with Vermont airports generated \$36.7 million in State and local taxes.

For convenience, the link to the study referenced above is included here:

[2021 Airport Economic Impact Study](#)

### **Middlebury Airport – Noise Mitigation and Visual Barriers**

The frequency and type of general aviation operations does not meet the noise threshold to support federal funding of sound mitigation methods for residents near the airport. For reference, the FAA manages a database for all aviation-related noise complaints. The Aviation Noise Complaint Inquiry and Response (ANCIR) database is available to anyone with aviation noise concerns and is publicly available on the website. ANCIR can be accessed using this link [FAA Noise Complaint Portal](#).

Information is also available on the AOT Aviation website that will direct people to the FAA for noise related complaints.

The security and wildlife mitigation fence at Middlebury Airport was 75% completed in FY11. In 2018, the remaining 25% of perimeter fence was completed to enclose the airport property. Aside from a small portion of fence near the main gate and terminal, the fence is 8 feet tall, per the FAA guidance for perimeter fence around general aviation airports. There are portions of the perimeter fence on the East side of the airport that have light reduction slats to shield from local residents. VTrans installed these slats in response to town feedback and concern over the light from airport operations. Due to the location of the fence, line of sight, and elevation differences, the light reduction slats are not practical in all areas. The height of fence needed to provide a complete visual shield would be at a height not allowed by FAA for aircraft safety, and create significant funding challenges and maintenance costs. In a recent hangar development project, VTrans approved an offer from the development to move fill from the project to a neighboring property for use in constructing a berm to shield visibility and/or noise. The neighbor chose not to pursue this offer.