

**Working Session: Ensuring Aurora State Airport for the next decade of ORS 836.642 operations.**

In 2006, the Oregon legislature directed the Department of Aviation through ORS 836.642 to establish through the fence operations at Aurora State Airport in order to promote economic development. This program has flourished ever since with over 1,000 jobs now tied to the airport. With a new master plan set to set to conclude in 2023 which will set the stage for airport infrastructure for the following decade, it's time for the Oregon Aviation Board to review associated funding and airport management going into the next decade to ensure Aurora State Airport remains the economic engine first envisioned over 15 years ago.

**FUNDING**

In terms of airport management, Aurora State Airport does generate funds back to the Oregon Department of Aviation of roughly \$90 to \$100K annually. However, expected expenditures for the next decade significantly exceeds this. As such, additional funding sources need to be identified.

**Aurora Profit and Loss Statement By Biennium Not Including FAA & Connect OR Projects**

| <b>Biennium</b> | <b>Time Frame</b>      | <b>Revenues</b>        | <b>Expenditures</b>    | <b>Profit</b>          |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2009-2011       | July 09-June 11        | 350,054.00             | 207,946.00             | 142,108.00             |
| 2011-2013       | July 11-June 13        | 358,373.00             | 101,576.00             | 256,797.00             |
| 2013-2015       | July 13-June 15        | 400,467.00             | 121,078.00             | 279,389.00             |
| 2015-2017       | July 15-June 17        | 431,154.00             | 206,620.00             | 224,534.00             |
| 2017-2019       | July 17-June 19        | 461,857.00             | 243,618.00             | 218,239.00             |
| 2019-2021       | July 19-June 21        | 457,856.91             | 277,428.00             | 180,428.91             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>July 09-June 21</b> | <b>\$ 2,459,761.91</b> | <b>\$ 1,158,266.00</b> | <b>\$ 1,301,495.91</b> |

Note: Expenditures include operations and maintenance staff time, utilities and tower expenses. ODA does not fully allocate all related costs (such as accounting or management including the state airport manager)

Anticipated Project List (expected ODA 10% match) - Costs are rough estimates for discussion only

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| FY 2022: | Easement acquisition supporting obstacle removal | \$825,000 |
| FY 2023: | Tree removal                                     | \$509,000 |

|                 |   |                 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| FY 2024:        | Environmental Assessment for runway extension | \$580,000       |
| FY 2024:        | Phase 1 Runway Rehab (design)                 | \$373,000       |
| FY 2025:        | Phase 2 Runway Rehab (construction)           | \$2,360,000     |
| FY 2026:        | Runway extension Property Purchase            | \$4,000,000     |
| FY 2026:        | Runway extension Design Engineering           | \$2,275,000     |
| FY 2027:        | Runway extension Construction                 | \$26M - \$30M   |
| Total:          |   | \$37M - \$41M   |
| TOTAL ODA Costs |   | \$3.7M - \$4.1M |

Funding Sources being explored:

- FAA AIP grants – The federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program provides funding for AIP-eligible projects identified on the airports master plan. The federal share is generally 90%, with a local 10% match.
- Federal Earmark – in addition to AIP grants, Congress members have the opportunity to request directed spending (or earmarks) for specific projects. Although this practice was banned about ten years ago, Congress has recently agreed to begin sponsoring these requests again.
- State Bonding / State Funds
- Federal Transportation Funds from expected Federal infrastructure package
- Connect OR – The OR Department of Transportation has a grant program for marine, rail and aviation. This competitive grant process is generally offered once every two years and requires a 30% local match.
- SOAR – The OR Department of Aviation has a small grant program for repair and capital improvements at the 28 state-owned airports. It is currently paused due to declining revenues related to the pandemic.

**STAFFING**

Besides being designated for through the fence operations, Aurora is ODA’s only Urban General Aviation Airport with a daily total operations of 94,935 versus the next busiest ODA airport at Independence with 33,600 total operations. Aurora is also unique in the amount of revenue produced as well as economic impact with 1,500 on airport jobs versus Independence at 21. Finally, the fast-growing community in which the airport resides is especially sensitive of the issues brought about by grow and requires a level of public engagement unlike any other ODA owned airport. This fact was specifically called out in an earlier Oregon Solutions report, recommending that “ODA, as the owner of the asset, owns the burden of proper communication related to the airport. While it has worked to provided public engagement for planning purposes, the question of how meaningful that engagement was still exists” and in terms of stakeholder communication, “ODA should take a leadership role” in providing forums for communication.

Looking at the data, it's clear Aurora is considerably different than any other airport in ODA's portfolio. So, in addition to reviewing governing structures for Aurora, the question needs to be asked if Aurora has grown beyond what the staffing levels within ODA can give it and if it's time for a level of fulltime staffing.

In contrast to the growing vitality of Aurora State Airport, ODA has seen continuous cuts both in overall staffing and in operations manpower.

2003-05 budget, ODA had 16 FTE, with 5 in Ops.  
2007-09, ODA had 17 FTE, with 7 in Ops  
2011-13, ODA had 16 FTE, with 7 in Ops  
2013-15, ODA had 12.5 FTE, with 5 in Ops.  
2015-17, ODA had 12 .25FTE, with 5 in Ops  
2017-19 , ODA had 14.25 FTE, with 5 in Ops  
2019-21, ODA had 15.5 FTE, with 6.5 in Ops  
2021-23, ODA will have 12.5 FTE, with 4.5 in Ops

This is a disturbing trend but doesn't necessarily point towards more dedicated manpower for Aurora State. Rather the Board needs to review expectations for airport management at Aurora and balance them against what ODA can provide. Generally, airport management includes such administrative roles as managing FAA grants, scheduling and documenting meetings, assembling traffic counts, basic accounting, contract management for snow removal, grass cutting, wildlife hazard management, lights and signs maintenance, pavement maintenance and any potential items that may arise. It also includes operational duties including community involvement, i.e., maintain public relations, ensuring the facility is operated in an efficient and safe manner, Contract Tower management/coordination, lease negotiations, manage the through-the-fence operations, airport security, issue NOTAMs, construction management, obstruction removal, conduct regular inspections, etc.

Optimally, two individuals would fulfill these roles: an Airport Manager and an assistant. Should the board want to investigate manning specific to Aurora, initial estimates would be an airport manager salary of \$75,000 - \$95,000 depending upon experience with an assistant ranging from \$60,000 to \$75,000.

Unfortunately, there's no specific formula directing when an airport needs full time management as it's heavily influenced by the airport sponsors' desire and the funds available. As a reference, below is a review of other Urban General Aviation Airports similarly classed to Aurora State. These airports support all general aviation aircraft and accommodate corporate aviation activity, including piston and turbine engine aircraft, business jets, helicopters, gliders, and other general aviation activity. The most demanding user requirements are business-related. These airports service a

large/multi-state geographic region or experience high levels of general aviation activity. The minimum runway length objective for Category II airports is 5,000 feet (Oregon Aviation Plan).

Included Airports:

Aurora State Airport

- Airport: 144 acres; Total operations: 66,000
- No dedicated airport manager, State of Oregon acts as airport manager

Portland – Hillsboro Airport

- Airport: 928 acres; Total operations: 199,155
- No dedicated airport manager; Port of Portland acts as airport manager

Bend Municipal Airport

- Airport: 420 acres; Total operations: 141,175.
- Full time airport manager, salary: \$81,785.60 - \$106,225.60

Portland -Troutdale Airport

- 284 acres; Total operations: 121,977
- No dedicated airport manager; Port of Portland acts as airport manager

McMinnville Municipal Airport

- Airport: 650 acres; Total operations: 63,500
- No dedicated airport manager; FBO serves as airport manager

Scappoose Industrial Airpark

- Airport: 196 acres; Total operations: 60,000
- Full time airport manager

Corvallis Municipal Airport

- Airport: 1,520 acres; Total operations: 52,300
- No dedicated airport manager; Public Works serves as airport manager

Warrenton-Astoria Regional Airport

- Airport: 870 acres; Total operations: 38,721 operations.
- No dedicated airport manager; Port of Astoria serves as airport manager

Salem McNary Field

- Airport: 751 acres; Total operations: 35,657
- Full time airport manager, salary \$84,000 - \$113,000

#### Newport Municipal Airport

- Airport: 700 acres; Total operations: 16,000
- Full time airport manager, salary \$73,500 - \$96,340

#### LaGrande/Union County Airport

- Airport: 640 acres; Total operations: 16,000
- No dedicated airport manager; Public Works serves as airport manger

### **GOVERNING STRUCTURES**

The Oregon Aviation Board is committed to ensuring airports across the state provide an aviation system that effectively serves our communities, airport users, and the region as a whole. A large part of this responsibility entails direct oversight of the Oregon Department of Aviation and the 28 airports it owns. Of these 28, Aurora State Airport is the largest and most dynamic, supporting 1,500 jobs and contributing over \$1.8M to county's general fund in taxes. Ensuring the governing structures remain in sync with the growing airport is a key part of the board's oversight responsibilities for this site.

The major driver of growth at the Aurora State Airport is its unique position within Oregon as the state's largest "through the fence" pilot program. As a state recognized program governed by ORS 836, ODA is tasked to utilize public-private relationships to ensure *"Shared responsibility for: (A) Establishing and meeting the fiscal needs of the pilot site (ie. test site); (B) Maintaining safety of operations; and C) Maintaining positive community relations and compatibility with existing uses. Examples of past public-private ventures at the airport are included as an attached appendix for reference.*

While public-private partnerships have been effective in the past, no guidance exists on when it should be used or what their limits are. As such, there's confusion on expected roles within the decision-making process. Explicitly this revolves around what level of engagement ODA should exercise with the business entities and to what extent those entities should be able to influence ODA's actions in its role as the airport sponsor. Because of this, the board should look at whether there are any required changes in policy to eliminate confusion in the future.

In addition to tweaking existing relationships within the existing construct with ODA as the airport sponsor, the board may want to review other ownership possibilities in the name of thoroughness. The reason for this is while the costs of airport operations and maintenance often makes local ownership unfeasible, Aurora State Airport has grown into a healthy, thriving enterprise and is at a point where alternate ownership may be viable. In particular, ORS 836.642 stipulates

*(6) To the extent practicable, the airport sponsors shall utilize innovative airport infrastructure and operations funding to support the pilot sites including, but not limited to:*

- (a) Airport districts as provided in ORS chapter 838;*
- (b) Economic development programs administered by the Oregon Business Development Department;*
- (c) Tax increment financing to provide funding for airport-related infrastructure;*
- (d) United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development grants or low-interest loans; and*
- (e) Programs, including funding for short line railroads under ORS 367.067 (Short Line Credit Premium Account), designed to facilitate development of intermodal transportation projects. [2005 c.820 §3; 2009 c.398 §2]*

So what is an “Airport District”? It is a type of “Special District” authorized via ORS 838 to manage airports and enhance local economies. In general, Special Districts ... “are a form of local government created by a local community to meet a specific need. Inadequate revenue bases and competing demands for existing taxes make it difficult for cities and counties to provide all of the services that their constituents want. When residents or landowners want new services or higher levels of existing services, they can form a district to pay for them. Each special district focuses on a specific set of services, like fire protection, water, healthcare, parks and recreation.” (Special Districts Association of Oregon). They are funded through property tax revenues or fees charged to customers for services, and also has the authority to issue bonds.

Coos County Airport District is Oregon’s only current airport district and oversees the Southwest Regional Airport in North Bend. It was formed, as a Special District, by general election on December 4, 2002. The District is responsible for the operation of the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport and strives to provide a stable economic base for aviation services for all of Coos County. The District is governed by a Board of five Commissioners elected county wide. The primary duty of the Board is to establish policies for the governance of the District and provide oversight of its daily activities. The Executive Director and staff, operate under the oversight of the District, and are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the airport. The Board established three primary goals for the District in 2003

- Make the District financially independent so that no tax dollars will be required for operations
- Maintain and enhance general and commercial aviation
- Operate and maintain the airport Business Park in support of general and commercial aviation.

Process for Special District Formation. There are three procedures that may be used to form a special district:

- The filing of a petition for formation
- The consent of all property owners within the area of the proposed district
- Initiation and order of the county board (for districts located entirely within its borders).

Once the petition has been approved by the required county agencies, the county must hold a hearing within 30 to 50 days. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the county board will further evaluate the petition according to ORS 199.462. Upon county approval, a final hearing will be held, after which the county enacts formation resolution and an election date is scheduled.

Appendix 1: KUAO Public Private Partnership (Aurora Airport Improvement Association)

# KUAO Public Private Partnership:

## A list of Historic, On-going, and Planned Examples

Aurora Airport Improvement Association 14497 Keil Road  
Aurora, Oregon 97002

September 3, 2021

### Summary Report

Aurora Airport is an FAA approved “through the fence” type of public airport that is a mix of public and private lands. Most public airports are not this, and have all of their lands owned by the government agency. When all of the land is publicly owned, all of the users are “tenants.” Tenants on public land have time-limited leases during which to create their development, and when the lease is over, the development reverts to public ownership. Airport tenants at these airports often point out that at the mid-point of their lease periods, they lose motivation to maintain and improve their development, because they often are forced to move out at the end of the lease.

At Aurora Airport the private properties create additional “owner” relationships with the airport that are different from being a “tenant.” Ownership promotes the making of permanent long term investments that retain their value, and that often result in more durable aviation businesses from a community investment and employment standpoint. The uses of the buildings can be more quickly changed to meet market changes, and industry innovations, because ownership also allows rapid redevelopment and re-investment using conventional financing methods of the banking industry.

The essence of a public-private partnerships (often referred to as PPP’s) are that they can join the best of the public sector knowledge and abilities, with the best of the private sector knowledge and abilities, to create a better result. As joint owners, they share responsibility for the success of the airport. The private sector owners become partners with the public airport. This makes for a strong combination. The private owners have “skin in the game.” For their business to be successful, they need the airport to be successful. There is a built in “win-win” relationship with the airport. For the public side, this means that the private owners put in time, resources, and funds that specifically benefit the public airport as a whole.

Examples of the public-private improvement projects accomplished through the years at Aurora Airport, that provided large public benefits, are listed in the bullets below. For those who want to know more about each bullet item, the following pages provide more details of their history and current status:

- 1. 2021 – The private side of Aurora Airport annually puts \$1.9 million dollars into the local schools, police, fire, and other Marion County services. The businesses at the airport employ 1,500 workers with family wage pay. So the public-private partnership at Aurora Airport uniquely better supports local citizens than a traditional publicly owned airport.**



2. In 2015, the private sector properties at Aurora Airport joined with ORAVI and OPA to strongly lobby support for HB 2075 to raise the fuel tax rate in Oregon and have those additional funds support airport infrastructure, airport economic development, and the Oregon Department of Aviation. ODA staff were prohibited from advocating for the bill, so private sector support was essential.
3. In 2012, the FAA approved the Control Tower project in the 2012 Airport Master Plan, but there were no funds available for it. ODA made clear that they could not advocate for those funds and had to remain neutral. The private sector worked extensively with the Oregon Congressional Delegation during 2013 and 2014 to explain the importance of the Control Tower for airport safety, which resulted in funds becoming available and construction completed in 2015.
4. In 2007, to improve the instrument approach capabilities of the airport, the parallel taxiway needed to be relocated to meet FAA's design standard for a greater runway-taxiway centerline separation. Most of the property needed for this relocation was on private properties. There was a friendly and quick agreement created. In 2009, the taxiway relocation was completed.
5. In 2005, with Aurora Airport showing the power of using a public-private model for an airport, the legislature approved Senate Bill 680 which instructed all state agencies to use the Aurora Airport as a model airport for how an airport can maximize its Economic Development impact to Oregon and its surrounding communities.
6. In 2003, there was agreement that the runway should be reconstructed to add 1000 feet of length and to resurface and groove it for safety. However, there were no FAA funds available for the work at the time. ODA made clear that they could not advocate for those funds and had to remain neutral. The private sector worked extensively with our Congressional Delegation, the FAA, and ODA to get the funding committed for the work. The runway extension was completed in 2004.
7. 2003 - Creation of the Aurora Airport Water Control District, to solve major fire and life safety needs for all at the airport, led by the needs of private sector, assisted by Marion County, and providing a fire protection water system for the entire ODA airport.
8. 1999 Agreement to install comprehensive Fencing and Security gates around the entire perimeter of the Airport, paid by Private funds on Private Land, and paid by FAA Public funds on Public Land.
9. 1999 The Airport Gate colors & Airport Signs were installed on Canby-Hubbard Highway, Keil Road, Arndt Road, and Airport Road, thus creating the Red, Yellow, Purple, Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow, Gates and Signs around the airport. All of the design, construction, and installation was paid by the private sector. The State agreed to maintain them and pay for the electricity in them.
10. 1999 – Joint use parking lot developed for state owned public tie-down area with private funds and public on-going maintenance.
11. 1999 – Joint use septic system developed on leased land from the state, is now shared to provide the needs for the Control Tower toilet facilities.

- 12. 1997 - Stenbock Road, the major entry to the public airport lands that have FBO, tie-downs, hangars, and the Control Tower, was created by a public-private partnership.**
- 13. 1996 Creation of Positive Aurora Airport Management (PAAM) by the private sector, at the request of the public sector, to be the Liaison between the airport users, pilots, the surrounding communities, and anyone interested in be involved in the airport, with the ODA.**
- 14. 1986 – The private sector willingly sold private land to the state, for the creation of what became the public tie-down, hangar development, and Control Tower Area.**
- 15. 1968+ - Private sector airport management donated much of the time needed for providing weather reporting, Unicom service and monitoring of the airport runway.**
- 16. 1943 - As a military airport, the runway was constructed with public funds, and the aircraft aprons were all on private property. This shows that even at the beginning of the airport’s existence it was a public-private partnership.**
- 17. Miscellaneous examples of the public-private partnership efforts through private efforts that provided: radar coverage to the Aurora Airport area, getting the airport sign on I-5, presentation of WWII aircraft to honor veterans, bringing local retirement home residents for visit, weather reporting that is useful for the public, and many open houses at the airport for the public.**

Consistent with this long history of public-private partnerships at Aurora Airport there are two projects that are just now under way:

- **Private property owners are now negotiating with ODA for a partnership to install an internal circulation road that has been in the FAA and state approved Airport Layout Plan (ALP) since 2012.**
- **Private Property owners are requesting a partnership with ODA to help get the tree removal accomplished as the trees are now potentially going to raise the landing IFR flight altitude minimums needed for safety during periods of low visibility at the airport.**

**Detailed Report**

There has been a long history of public-private projects accomplished at the Aurora Airport, because a large amount of the developed lands around the airport are on private properties. These properties have been allowed access to the use of the runway and taxiways via a permit system with the state that requires payment of a fee and annual renewal of the access permit. In addition, all fuel sold at the airport pays a tax to the state, which supports the Oregon Department of Aviation and their airport improvement programs.

More important than paying their share of the costs of the airport, through access fees to the runway, is the synergy created by public-partner partnerships. These have allowed for very efficient, low cost, innovative major improvements at Aurora Airport at much reduced cost to the airport, due to the donations of funds, time, and effort by the private sector.

Examples of these public-private improvement projects accomplished through the years, that provided large public benefits, are listed in the bullets below:

- 1. 2021 – The private side of Aurora Airport annually puts \$1.9 million dollars into the local schools, police, fire, and other Marion County services. The businesses at the airport employ 1,500 workers with family wage pay. So the public-private partnership at Aurora Airport uniquely better supports local citizens than a traditional publicly owned airport.**

Most publicly owned development does not pay taxes. However, the private sector pays full taxes on their property development. Thus, at Aurora Airport the private development provides enormous support for governmental services, that most public airports do not provide to their local community. Most recently Marion County records show approximately \$250 million value of development at the airport, and this creates \$1.9 million in annual taxes paid to Marion County. The taxes next year are expected to be well over \$2 million. This supports schools, police, fire, parks, roads, and governmental services for the local area and the county at large. In addition, the approximately 1,500 employees of companies at the airport, pay income taxes as do the employers also pay additional taxes for each employee, which provides great support at the state level for social services, roads, bridges, and administrative services.

- 2. In 2015, the private sector properties at Aurora Airport joined with ORAVI and OPA to strongly lobby support for HB 2075 to raise the fuel tax rate in Oregon and have those additional funds support airport infrastructure, airport economic development, and the Oregon Department of Aviation. ODA staff were prohibited from advocating for the bill, so private sector support was essential.**

In 2015 Oregon Aviation Industries Inc. (ORAVI) wrote HB 2075 and called for an increase in the aviation and jet fuel tax rate. The bill was specifically written to support airport infrastructure, economic development, and the ODA administration. The Aurora Airport private sector properties joined with ORAVI and the Oregon Pilots Association (OPA) to strongly support this bill by testifying in the Legislature and contacting their State Representatives and Senators. The bill was opposed by the Port of Portland and the Airlines because much of the tax revenues

would come from the airlines. The ODA director and staff were told by the Governor that they could not advocate for the tax or have involvement with the bill. The private sector properties recognized the importance of the increase in fuel taxes to maintaining the health of all of Oregon airports. The private sector support ruled the day, and HB 2075 passed and was signed by the Governor.

- 3. In 2012, the FAA approved the Control Tower project in the 2012 Airport Master Plan, but there were no funds available for it. The private sector worked extensively with the Oregon Congressional Delegation during 2013 and 2014 to explain the importance of the Control Tower for airport safety, which resulted in funds becoming available and construction completed in 2015.**

The 2012 Airport Master Plan Update confirmed the need for construction of a control tower, as had previous Master Plans. The FAA approved the Control Tower, but there were no funds available for it. ODA made clear that they could not advocate for those funds and had to remain neutral. The private airport sector worked extensively with the Oregon Congressional Delegation during 2013 and 2014 to explain the importance of the Control Tower for safety at the airport. The Congressional delegation working with the FAA was able to find some FAA projects in other Districts that could not meet their deadlines, and the funds could be transferred to Aurora. So in 2015 a control tower was constructed and became operational, in large part because of the private sector efforts.

- 4. In 2007, to improve the instrument approach capabilities of the airport, the parallel taxiway needed to be relocated to meet FAA's design standard for a greater runway-taxiway centerline separation. Most of the property needed for this relocation was on private properties. There was a friendly and quick agreement created. In 2009, the taxiway relocation was completed.**

To improve the instrument approach capabilities of the airport, the parallel taxiway needed to be relocated to meet FAA's design standard for a greater runway-taxiway centerline separation. Most of the property needed for this relocation was on private properties. Since it was a win-win for both parties, there was a friendly and quick agreement created so that the state could acquire the needed property. The relocation of the taxiway allowed the minimum descent altitude for the instrument approaches to be lowered, so that the airport was useful when the cloud ceilings were lower. In 2009, the taxiway relocation was completed.

- 5. In 2005, with Aurora Airport showing the power of using a public-private model for an airport, the legislature approved Senate Bill 680 which instructed all state agencies to use the Aurora Airport as a model airport for how an airport can maximize its Economic Development impact to Oregon and its surrounding communities.**

Senate Bill 680 called for the Oregon Department of Aviation to use Aurora Airport as the model for how a public-private partnership at an airport could work to create jobs and improved economy for the community. It referenced "through the fence" operations, which is

the aviation lingo for an airport public-private partnership. Its goals to show how rural airports can encourage development of through the fence operations designed to promote economic development by creating family wage jobs, by increasing local tax bases and by increasing financial support for rural airports.

To the extent practicable, the airport sponsor of a pilot site shall use public-private partnerships that incorporate: (a) Innovative and creative technologies for increasing airport usability and safety; (b) Innovative and creative performance of aviation services to make the services more competitive and useful for the public; (c) Development of the pilot site as a setting for customary and usual aviation-related activities to develop and thrive, in concert with the goals of the Economic and Community Development Department; and (d) Shared responsibility for: (A) Establishing and meeting the fiscal needs of the pilot site; (B) Maintaining safety of operations; and (C) Maintaining positive community relations and compatibility with existing uses. It used Aurora Airport as the model for other airports to follow.

- 6. In 2003, there was agreement that the runway should be reconstructed to add 1000 feet of length and to resurface and groove it for safety. However, there were no FAA funds available for the work at the time. ODA made clear that they could not advocate for those funds and had to remain neutral. The private sector worked extensively with our Congressional Delegation, the FAA, and ODA to get the funding committed for the work. The runway extension was completed in 2004.**

In 2003, there was agreement that the time had come when the runway should be reconstructed to add 1000 feet of length and to resurface and groove it for safety. This was part of a runway extension that had been planned since 1976 as part of the airport's master plans. However, there were no FAA funds available for the work at the time. ODA made clear that they could not advocate for those funds and had to remain neutral. The private sector worked extensively with our Congressional Delegation, the FAA, and ODA to get the funding committed for the work. The runway extension was completed in 2004.

- 7. 2003 - Creation of the Aurora Airport Water Control District, to solve major fire and life safety needs for all at the airport, led by the needs of private sector, assisted by Marion County, and providing a fire protection water system for the entire ODA airport.**

In 1999 Dick VanGrunsven bought a portion of the land in the south end of the airport, with the goal of re-locating his company Van's Aircraft to Aurora Airport. An initial Van's building was designed and submitted to Marion County for building permits. Prior to this time there had been construction of hangars at some of the private lands at the airport. However, this was a moment in time when the building code was changing. In 2000 the International Building Code came into being to replace the Uniform Building Code. Oregon would be formally adopting the new IBC in 2004, but the State Fire Marshal wanted to promote safety so advised that, whereas prior large buildings at the airport hadn't needed to have water fire sprinkling, soon that would be a requirement. So Van's first building was allowed to be constructed without fire sprinkling, however the State Fire Marshal said: "no more until you have a fire protection water system at the airport." In reality, each property could have created its own water

system, but that would have meant that there would be the cost of building 10 or more different large reservoirs or tanks for water, with pipes, fire hydrants, and a large pump, each costing upwards of \$750,000 each (\$1.25m in 2021 dollars). Instead, the land owners all got together and looked at options for creating a common system that would serve all of their properties.

Marion County played a big role in this, helping the joint group of airport private properties and public properties create a “Water District.” In 2002 the Aurora Airport Water Control District was created by the Marion County Commissioners, following filing of a petition and testimony of how it was a new requirement for many airport buildings. The AAWCD, now formed, could then go to the USDA Rural Development branch of the federal government and request, and in 2003 received a loan of \$703,000 to build a 247,800 gallon underground tank system, a pump house, underground water pipes, fire hydrants, and “T” connections for private sprinkler systems. The State ODA offered up their land for the underground tanks, a well-water for water replenishment of the tanks. In 2004 the system was up and running just as the new IBC code came into effect.

Initial planning and management of the project was done by the private sector as donated time. Where costs were incurred for initial engineering the private sector donated those costs up front. Marion County assisted in the creation of the water district. On opening, the Aurora Fire District performed a water truck caravan training session using multiple fire districts in the area to do the initial filling of the tanks from water in the Willamette River. The Aurora Fire District has continued to use the system for their training exercises, year by year. They have also used the water on occasion for off airport firefighting activities in the community.

The management of the water system is largely done by volunteer effort of the Board of Directors, four of whom are from private properties, and one from State ODA. Thankfully, in the following 17 years there has so far, not been a need for the water system – there have been no building fires. None-the-less, most of the current buildings have fire sprinklers. Fire marshals often explain the importance of fire sprinklers: if a fire occurs in a building that has a fire sprinkler system, on average one and a half heads go off. This means, the one or two heads that went off, put the fire out, and that was the end of the problem. Aurora Airport now has this status, thanks to the very strong public-private partnership that accomplished the creation of the Aurora Airport Water Control District.

The AAWCD infrastructure has allowed other important uses at the airport. In 2014 a Control Tower was installed at the airport. This could not have occurred without the availability of Oregon building code required fire protection water. In 2020 the water system was made available to the Oregon Department of Forestry to fight the wild fires burning east and south of Estacada. And today, the presence of Van’s Aircraft, Life Flight Network Regional Headquarters, and many other nationally known businesses the 1,500 workers at the airport, was only possible because of that public-private effort.

- 8. 1999 Agreement to install comprehensive Fencing and Security gates around the entire perimeter of the Airport, paid by Private funds on Private Land, and paid by FAA Public funds on Public Land.**

As the airport grew, in 1999, the need for a major new security fence at the airport was needed. There were major problems with deer and coyotes on the runway, as well as visitors to the airport driving right out onto active operations areas. To best allow for the safe operation of the airport as a whole airport community, private owners and the state came together to design, jointly fund (emphasis added) and construct a comprehensive and complete perimeter fence system. This included the state establishing a common standard for all of the automatically operated sliding security gates. This system improved safety and security by reducing wildlife contacts with aircraft as well as helped reduce the illegal operations of motor vehicles on state airport owned facilities.

**9. 1999 The Airport Gate colors & Airport Signs were installed on Canby-Hubbard Highway, Keil Road, Arndt Road, and Airport Road, thus creating the Red, Yellow, Purple, Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow, Gates and Signs around the airport. All of the design, construction, and installation was paid by the private sector. The State agreed to maintain them and pay for the electricity in them.**

To modernize and improve the image of the airport, in 1999, a public private partnership was formed to create defined Gate colors & Airport Signs. They were installed on Canby-Hubbard Highway, Keil Road, Arndt Road, and Airport Road, thus creating the Red, Yellow, Purple, Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow, Gates and Signs around the airport. All of the design, construction, and installation was paid by the private sector. The State agreed to maintain them and pay for the electricity in them. designed and emplaced modern signage around the airport. The signage improved surface traffic flow around the airport as well as served to bring the airport an organized image in line with the growing investment in aviation related industry and jobs brought to the airport. This public private partnership project added greatly to making the airport a recognized economic engine of North Marion County.

**10. 1999 – Joint use parking lot developed for state owned public tie-down area with private funds and public on-going maintenance.**

The state had developed the public aircraft tie-down area it had acquired, and the Columbia Aviation Association had built a new meeting facility on land it owned. A joint use parking lot was developed in adjacent state owned land, to be used by both groups. The parking lot grading, paving, striping, and light poles were paid for and put in by the CAA, while the ODA agreed maintain the parking lot and pay for the electrical cost for the parking lot lights.

**11. 1999 – Joint use septic system developed on leased land from the state, is now shared to provide the needs for the Control Tower toilet facilities.**

The Columbia Aviation Association had built a new meeting facility on land it owned, but needed a septic system. The state leased land for CAA to put in a septic system. And then when the Control Tower was put up, it needed a septic system to connect to for the toilet in the Control Tower, so it was joined to the CAA's septic system, for joint use, since it was on the same state owned land.

**12. 1997 - Stenbock Road, the major entry to the public airport lands that have FBO, tie-downs, hangars, and the Control Tower, was created by a public-private partnership.**

The entry to the state's public 10 acres of land used to be an odd curving gravel road which still shows up as lines on the county tax map. There was a need for a direct road into the 10 acres that the state had bought. So a public-private deal was created whereby: a) the land area was donated by the private sector as an easement, b) a logger paid by the property owner agreed to cut down the trees, c) a third private sector person (pilot and contractor Brian Cloptan) took out all the stumps, and with that done, d) the state agreed to construct a new asphalt road and maintain it.

**13. 1996 Creation of Positive Aurora Airport Management (PAAM) by the private sector, at the request of the public sector, to be the Liaison between the airport users, pilots, the surrounding communities, and anyone interested in be involved in the airport, with the ODA.**

In 1996, Aurora State Airport was looked at as a rural, uncontrolled airport, far on the outskirts of the Portland Metropolitan area. Thinking there was nothing important happening at the airport, there arose a significant effort by a minority in the surrounding area to actually close down the airport. In fact the Mayor of the City of Aurora at that time organized a group named "Stop" that had the goal of closing Aurora Airport. Their plan was to create in its place "Williamsburg of the West."

State officials, local owners of airport neighboring properties and private enterprise came together at the request of the Director of ODA (Betsy Johnson at that time) to form the Positive Aurora Airport Management (PAAM). There was a signed agreement that this volunteer group's purpose was to be ODA's liaison to the community. PAAM created a forum for all of the voices of interested parties within and around the airport to talk together and learn from each other. By having all the parties at the table together, hearing each other in real time, it created a place for neighbors to be able to find out what was going on at the airport, and for people at the airport to know what at the airport was affecting neighborhoods around the airport. The PAAM group began in 1996 and has continuously operated ever since.

PAAM focuses on safety, respectful flight operations, noise abatement, surface traffic, discussion of planning efforts for needed improvements, interaction with schools, aviation related training of first responders, coordination of flights during periods of construction, making the airport available for community events, assisting coordination for firefighting, and more. It is a forum for complaints to be heard, solutions proposed, and an effort made to have good relations between the airport and the community. Common involved people attending are:

- a. Airport Private Property Owners
- b. Airport business heads and managers
- c. ODA Director & Staff
- d. ODA board members
- e. Aircraft users, pilots & mechanics



- f. Control tower operators
- g. Aurora Fire Department Chief & Staff
- h. Marion County Sherriff's Department
- i. Clackamas County Sherriff's department
- j. Charbonneau Representatives
- k. City of Aurora Representatives
- l. Contractors doing work on the airport
- m. Many others, including interested citizens

Meetings are held weekly on Thursday mornings, with typical attendance by 20 to 40 people. Membership is voluntary and there are no paid staff. So it is funded by the airport private businesses who volunteer their staff to do the work needed of running the meetings, issuing agendas, issuing meeting minutes, and sending out coordination emails. It has been so successful that it has been copied by airports around the nation as a model way to be involved with the interests of the surrounding community.

**14. 1986 – The private sector willingly sold private land to the state, for the creation of what became the public tie-down, hangar development, and Control Tower Area.**

The 1976 Airport Master Plan pointed out that the State should own more than just the airfield property. A most important aspect of this was that ODA and the FAA wanted there to be a State controlled location for an FBO facility that could guarantee that airport services would always be available to users of the public airport. At one point the ODA reported to the private owners that the FAA would not continue funding airfield developments at the airport unless some public land was acquired that could guarantee public access. So Bruce's family willingly agreed to sell ten acres to the state in 1986, to solve that problem. This is the land that became the ODA's developed public tie-down, FBO, hangar development, and Control Tower Area.

**15. 1968+ - Private sector airport management donated much of the time needed for providing weather reporting, Unicom service, and monitoring of the airport runway.**

Bruce's company, Aurora Aviation in the days beginning in 1968 assisted in much of the management of the airport. This included having the staff take classes and become certified in weather reporting, including the release of weather balloons. This information was gathered so that when an airplane called in on the radio unicom, his staff would respond on the radio with an airport advisory including weather conditions. This weather information also went hourly into regional weather data used by NOAA. The FBO staff were also the ones who would go out and take care of getting the runway cleared up if a plane was stuck on the runway, such as from landing with wheel gear up. This volunteer effort of the private sector continues to this day, evidenced by Lynx FBO recently clearing a disabled Aircraft off the runway in July of this year.

**16. 1943 - As a military airport, the runway was constructed with public funds, and the aircraft aprons were all on private property. This shows that even at the beginning of the airport's existence it was a public-private partnership.**

Aurora Airport was constructed in 1943, during World War II by the United States Army Air Forces. At that point in the war the outcome was still in serious question. Just a year prior, a Japanese submarine along the south Oregon coast had launched a floatplane that had dropped incendiary bombs inland, trying to start major forest fires. Another Japanese submarine had fired shells at Fort Stevens near Astoria. It was recognized by the Federal government that there was an essential need to be able to patrol and defend the West Coast with military aircraft from numerous locations in western Oregon. Aurora Airport was constructed and during its initial period was used for patrolling the coast, looking for enemy ships and aircraft, and for pilot training.

Aurora Airport from its beginning, represents a major investment of public tax dollars, to create essential public infrastructure. As a military airport, Aurora Airport was designed, and construction specified, using the standard military criteria of that era. It was established as a 150 foot wide by 4,104 foot long runway. The asphalt pavement was built upon a very thick, heavy gravel base, designed to accommodate the loads of military aircraft. This included the ability to handle medium and heavy bombers such as B-25, B-26, B-17, B-24 and cargo aircraft such as C-45, C46, and C-54. It is particularly interesting that all of the ramp areas used for tiedowns, fueling, and repair of aircraft was on the adjacent private lands. Thus, many of seen the early picture of the PBY's at Aurora Airport. Those are in the area where South End Corporate Airpark is now. In fact, from its beginning in 1943 until the early 1980's ALL development (other than airfield) at the Airport was on private property.

**17. Miscellaneous examples of the public-private partnership efforts through private efforts that provided: radar coverage to the Aurora Airport area, getting the airport sign on I-5, presentation of WWII aircraft to honor veterans, bringing local retirement home residents for visit, weather reporting that is useful for the public, and many open houses at the airport for the public.**

Miscellaneous examples of the public-private partnerships are: 1980's letters from Governor Tom McCall and Aurora Aviation working with the FAA and State government to bring radar coverage to the Aurora Area; Aurora Aviation working with Representative Denny Smith to install an Airport sign on I-5; 12 years that Aurora Aviation sponsored the Collings foundation's "living history" tour of their WWII Aircraft, inviting neighbors to the airport to honor Veterans; 2021 summer visit by "dream flights" bringing hundreds of local retirement home residents to the Airport; the current "AWOS" airport weather system (like the former volunteer manual weather reporting) feeds into the national weather system which in turn provides data for television weather reports for the public; Many open-houses and large airport events since the 1970s through the present inviting the public to view Aurora Airport operations.

**The Future**

Consistent with this long history of public-private partnerships at Aurora Airport there are two projects that are just now under way:

- **Private property owners are now negotiating with ODA for a partnership to install an internal circulation road that has been in the ALP since 2012.**
- **Private Property owners are requesting a partnership with ODA to help get the tree removal accomplished as the trees are now potentially going to raise the landing IFR flight altitude minimums needed for safety during periods of low visibility at the airport.**