



Project Summary

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Most people involved in the aviation industry can attest to the fact that the number of airports in the nation are on a decline. This reality has been documented by multiple sources, and is perhaps best illustrated by the number of public-use facilities nationwide that have closed over the past several years. In 2001, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) documented that the annual closure rate for public-use airports is one every two weeks. At its worst, the public-use airport annual closure rate averaged one a week.

While most closures have been to private-use facilities, public-use facilities are not immune to this trend. This is perhaps best illustrated by the highly publicized closure of Meigs Field in downtown Chicago. Regardless of ownership, nearly every one of these closures has been a general aviation facility. This has diminished the overall capacity of the nation's system of airports during a time of increased air traffic activity. In time, the loss of general aviation airports will affect those facilities supporting commercial passenger service by leaving fewer airports to accommodate growing demand. These impacts to the transportation infrastructure are far reaching. While negative effects to commerce and both local and national economies are certain, airport closures also threaten to undermine the community access provided by general aviation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Understanding this threat to public-use airports, NHDOT Bureau of Aeronautics decided to analyze Hampton Airfield as a case study. This small but active airport has endured many of the same challenges as airports much larger. One of the most impressive differences is the fact that the private owners have done so with very limited outside financial support. For these reasons, the various aspects of the Hampton Airfield's operation have been evaluated, and documented in the resulting research paper. This information has been used to develop tools that are intended to help promote, preserve, and protect not only Hampton Airfield, but other public-use airports in New Hampshire, and the country facing similar challenges. An *Airport Preservation Tool Box* was developed concurrently with this study and is intended primarily as a resource for airport stakeholders and proponents. The document was published in 2008 and can be accessed through the NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics' website.



Though this study was multifaceted, its focus was on the preservation of Hampton Airfield. In order to achieve this goal, an airport master plan was conducted in order to both document and gain a greater understanding of the airport as well as its history. The primary components of this study include the following elements:

- Airport Master Plan
- Plan Set consisting of 7 Graphics
- Preservation Plan
- Airport Ownership Transition Effects
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
- Economic Analysis
- Business Plan Update

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The success at Hampton Airfield has been due to the owner's ability to utilize a combination of different resources. This diversification has helped to generate the revenue required to maintain the airport's unique environment where aviation interests can be fostered, grow, and ultimately be shared with others. While the preservation of Hampton Airfield will certainly require a continuation of past efforts, changes in the industry and surrounding environment will necessitate additional resources. Unfortunately much of this will rely on assistance and programs that are not controlled by the airport owner.

An outline of **Action Recommendations and Initiative Leaders** taken from the research paper's *Preservation Plan – Chapter 4* is provided below.

Legislative Actions

1. Increase 50-50 grant funds to \$100,000 – NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics/Industry acceptance of 80-20 initiative
2. Tax relief amendments (if item 8 below is unsuccessful)
 - a. RSA 79-A Current Use applicability to airports
 - b. Increase tax reimbursement program to \$35,000
3. Allow public/private purchase pooling – NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics/Industry/LGC

Administrative Actions

4. Inclusion in the NPIAS – NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics
5. Explore insurance options with PRIMEX – NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics/PRIMEX/Insurance Commissioner

Industry Actions

6. Establish educational partnership(s) – Hampton Airfield
7. Establish municipal partnership(s) – Hampton Airfield
8. Discretionary easement application, RSA 79-C – Hampton Airfield/North Hampton
9. Explore insurance pool options – Hampton Airfield/GSAMA/Insurance Commissioner
10. Form industry purchasing coalition – Hampton Airfield/GSAMA

The spirit embodied by this unique airfield is best illustrated by the picture below.



Planting seeds...

Hampton Airfield
North Hampton, NH

Photo source: Airport owner