



**Marketing Plan Summary for the Sechelt Airport
Sunshine Coast, British Columbia**

Prepared for the District of Sechelt
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Introduction

This plan has been prepared as a companion document to the 2012 Business Plan for the Sechelt Airport. The assumptions regarding the number of leased lots for the airport and the re-development plan for airport infrastructure should be assumed when reading this marketing plan. Elements of the communications plan (which is included in the Business Plan) have also been reflected in this marketing plan.

The objective of the marketing effort is two-fold: first and foremost to maximize the revenue potential of the airport to support its operation, maintenance and capital needs and secondly to secure favorable public opinion for the airport in the community to ensure its long term success and growth.

Given Sunshine Coast transportation challenges and the absence of a critical mass of current aviation activity and talent of the Sunshine Coast, the challenges of attracting aviation businesses to re-locate here are significant. It is therefore proposed that the marketing efforts be structured as “informational” – seeking expert opinions from the industry thought leaders through in-person meetings and getting the word out to the industry that the airport is open for business through a combination of letters and advertising.

Because of the finite number of aviation businesses and the desire of airport authorities and airport owners to maximize the use of their industrially-zoned lands on airport sites, the competition for the niche that is the aviation business sector, is intense.

This plan is focused on the following target markets:

1. Marketing to air services providers
 - a. Scheduled Air Carriers
 - b. Charter, flight seeing
 - c. Cargo, courier
2. Marketing to General Aviation
3. Marketing Industrial lands
 - a. Target tenants
4. Marketing Air terminal usage
 - a. Terminal tenants such as restaurant, aviation supply store etc.
5. Marketing Advertising Opportunities
 - a. Within terminal, billboard, website, brochure racks
6. Marketing to attract Special events
 - a. Film making
 - b. Conferences, meetings, weddings, parties etc.

1. Marketing to secure an air carrier(s)

a. Introduction

Key to the success of the airport and the success of the community in improving transportation services, is finding an airline that is prepared to come into the community and provide services from the newly re-developed Sechelt Airport.

The business plan contemplates airlines using aircraft like the Shorts 360 or the Beech 1900 and serving the airport with 2 inbound and two outbound flights per day. In the third year of operation, it is projected that service could be increased by the inclusion of a mid-day flight during week-day operations.

The factor which will determine if an airline will move into a new market can be summed up as 'the potential to make a profit in the short term and possess growth prospects for the longer term'. The assessment of this potential is based on a thorough analysis of:

- 1) Forecast travel demand
- 2) Availability and condition of airport infrastructure
- 3) Competition
- 4) Marketing commitment and contribution by other stakeholders
- 5) Costs of using airport infrastructure
 - Terminal rents
 - Landing fees
 - Airport user fees

The following is a discussion of each of these factors:

b. Forecast Travel demand

Before an air carrier will come to the Sechelt market, they will want to ensure that the operation can be run profitably – ideally right from the start up of operations. In order to do this, they will assemble detailed information about travel demand. Taking the Beech 1900 as an example, they would be putting 38 inbound seats and 38 outbound seats into the market 365 days per year. They would need to establish if a year-round daily market for 25 plus seats per day is 'do-able'. The travel agents from the Sunshine Coast that were interviewed in the business planning exercise felt that it would be tough to fill 20 seats per day. To attract an airline, there will be a need to work with them to develop a package of incentives some of which could include waiving landing fees and/or passenger fees for the first year or two of operation.

c. Availability and condition of airport infrastructure

Prospective airlines will also need to know the details of the airport re-development plan including a timeline for implementation. It would be in Sechelt's best interest to have the airline doing their implementation planning while the redevelopment project is underway rather than waiting until the project is complete. In order to encourage the

airlines to do this, they will want to know that there is a firm commitment and financing in place to complete the project. The benefit of this project for an airline is that they would be getting in on the ground floor and could have important input into the design and construction of the facility (particularly the navigation aids and the terminal building) to best suit their operations.

d. Competition

Airlines will also want to know more about the competition from float plane operations. A land-based scheduled service will likely have little impact on these two operators' service to downtown Vancouver, Nanaimo and elsewhere on the coast. While commuters can take a land-based service to YVR and use the Canada Line to get downtown, it is not as convenient as the harbour-to-harbour service offered by these two carriers.

The flights by Harbour Air to the river at YVR's South Terminal would be affected by a scheduled carrier operating out of the Sechelt airport. At present there are 3 inbound and outbound flights by Harbour Air to the river. At 5 seats per flight, this represents a daily seat total of 30.

The float plane service to YVR is not well suited to connecting passengers' needs. This is in part due to cost, the lack of interlining, baggage weight and size restrictions and also weather and daylight operational which are all disincentives for connecting passengers.

e. Marketing commitment and contribution

Finally, the airlines will also want a firm commitment from the District of Sechelt, other levels of government and businesses on the Sunshine Coast that there will be collaboration and a financial contribution to the marketing efforts and that the marketing efforts of the Sunshine Coast will be in harmony with the efforts of the airline(s). A financial contribution to the marketing efforts will be expected and normally the airlines look at matching funding.

f. Costs of using airport infrastructure

The business plan is predicated on the following charges:

- Aircraft landing fee of \$10 which would apply to commercial aircraft;
- Terminal rent of \$500 per month;
- Passenger User Fee of \$5 per outbound flight. (While this charge is paid by the traveler, airlines view these charges as a factor in their ability to competitively price their product.)

Strategy

It is recommended that a marketing team lead by the Mayor and supported by a representative from the Airport Advisory Community and a senior business leader in the community, meet with airline executives to pitch them on Sechelt and the redeveloped airport.

It is recommended that a package be created with fact sheets speaking to each of the topics (“a” to “f” above). This combined with the Sechelt Fast Facts that was prepared for the WestJet presentation could also serve as collateral support to these meetings.

It is recommended that these meetings not take place until after financing is in place and a timetable has been set for airport re-development.

2. Marketing to General Aviation (GA)

Increasing the use of the airport as a GA airport helps to spread the word that the airport is “open for business”. A not insignificant number of GA pilots are involved in or connected with the aviation business sector. Both for GA and commercial activities, developing brand awareness will be an important component of the marketing effort. It is recommended that Sechelt work with a marketing company to develop the brand including a logo and promotional materials to support the marketing effort.

Increasing their awareness and their use of the airport is important to the long term development of the airport. Driving general aviation traffic to the airport also has the potential of improving fuel sales revenues.

Advertising in the Aviation News Journal and other trade publications is recommended, preferably if the advertising is specific to special events such as swap meets or fly in breakfasts etc.

Sechelt is well located for student pilots as a stop in their required cross country exercises. Writing to each of the flying schools in the lower mainland and following up with a phone call to encourage flight schools to include Sechelt in their cross-country route planning is also recommended. Below 2,500 feet, it is a good location for students to practice operating in the MF environment. .

Fly In’s – it is recommended that one or two fly in’s be organized each summer and targeted to recreational aircraft associations, the 99’s, flying clubs etc. Attendees could be given a memento (such as a chock key chain fob) to remind them of the Sechelt airport. A community event calendar could also be prepared as a “give away” so that visitors will know when they should schedule their next flight over to Sechelt.

3. Marketing Industrial Lands

Prospective tenants for the airport industrial lands that are currently in the aviation business are recommended as the first target of the marketing effort. Finding aviation-related tenants eliminates any uncertainty in terms of the interpretation of the reverter clauses in the crown land grants.

Land that is adjacent to or accessible to the runway infrastructure is also most suited to aviation businesses. Aviation companies are also most likely to be comfortable with the constraints of operating in and around an airport such as height and lighting restrictions, lighting, etc.

It is recommended that a targeted marketing effort with aviation businesses be done before a more a broader industrially-based marketing effort. The approach recommended is one-on one-contact approach with three separate levels of effort. It is recommended that:

- Tier one targets be visited by a marketing team, armed with collateral and a short video or presentation.
- Tier two targets be sent a customized letter that speaks specifically to their business and the opportunities for their business at the Sechelt Airport. The letter would be attached to the general marketing package.
- Tier three targets would be sent a standard letter with information about the airport and the community.

It is further recommended that this effort be complemented with an advertising campaign specifically directed to the aviation sector. Advertisements highlighting the features of the available land and the community be placed in aviation-related publications (ie – The Aviation News Journal, Canadian Aviation etc.).

Broader marketing approach

Should the effort to secure aviation business at the airport not be sufficient to fully utilize the available lands, it is recommended that the net be cast more broadly for other businesses and it is suggested that this be done by sending out the information package to commercial realtors.

This will likely result in a number of commercial realtors approaching Sechelt to represent the property. Sechelt should consider the merits of engaging a commercial realtor to represent and market the properties at the airport. It would be preferable to work with a commercial realtor with airport experience however if this is not possible, it will be important for the realtor to understand what kinds of business activities are incompatible with airport operations (ie saw mill with external facilities that generate significant amounts of dust, manufacturing or processing operations that generate smoke as a byproduct). It is recommended that Sechelt interview three commercial realtors to select the most suitable representative for the project.

It will be important to establish clear design guidelines for the property, incorporating standards for look, feel and construction materials and quality. Significant businesses will be reassured that they are not going to invest on the property only to have buildings of less quality appear adjacent to theirs. It is for this reason that it is recommended that the design guidelines be completed prior to marketing the facility. The design guidelines should be part of the “leave behind” package when meeting with prospective tenants. Draft Design Guidelines attached.

The design guidelines also need to reflect Transport Canada requirements for building height (setback), roofing material, reflective materials, and lighting requirements. The guidelines also need to proscribe vegetation to ensure that plants, trees, water features etc. are not inconsistent with airport operations.

The lease process will prescribe the requirements for maintaining assets on leased property. It will be important in developing the lease to ensure that there are provisions related to vermin control, grass cutting and other measures designed to be compatible with the wildlife control program at the airport.

4. Marketing Air terminal usage

The Sechelt Airport is not located on the main highway on the Sunshine Coast – it is a short 3 minute drive north of Highway 101 at the top of Field Road. It is not a well used route and therefore has little or no drive by traffic. It will therefore be difficult to market the terminal building to businesses such as restaurants and bookstores. Initial efforts to provide food services may be limited to vending machines and/or mobile food sales such as the Lighthouse Pub mobile unit for special events.

Restaurants at other small airports have survived by building a clientele of off airport patrons (Boundary Bay, Langley, Qualicum Beach are all good examples) or by establishing a reputation for excellence (Chilliwack’s pie). Terminal tenants such as aviation supply stores etc. will not be attracted to the site unless and until there is a critical mass of aviation activity at the Sechelt Airport.

5. Marketing Advertising Opportunitites

Within terminal, billboard, website, brochure racks. This will be a minor source of revenue and may need to be done as a service to the local business community at first in order to provide evidence of value for the investment in advertising materials at the airport location.

6. Marketing to attract special events

- a. Film making
- b. Conferences, meetings, weddings, parties etc.

DRAFT DESIGN STANDARDS FOR THE SECHELT AIRPORT

Building Quality and Materials

- Buildings will be subject to the District's standards and will be approved through the normal District Planning building permit/approval process
- Buildings will be frame construction with metal cladding or will be a combination of brick, block or prefabricated concrete construction. Materials should be selected that will age well and that will be resistant to effects of local conditions (such as moss and algae accumulation).
- Materials (and colours) that will fade or streak or otherwise become unsightly with age will not be approved
- Wood clad buildings are not permitted
- Buildings will be designed with a sense of proportion to adjacent buildings on the airport property.
- Large featureless surfaces are to be avoided. Surfaces of greater than 50 feet should have a change in texture, material, openings, porticos awnings etc.

Ancillary Structures

Dumpsters

- Visual blinds or sheds must be constructed to hide dumpsters from view.

On site fuel storage tanks

- Must be double walled and be constructed within a security dam

Fencing

- Must be chain link fencing that does not exceed 8 feet in height

Colour palette

- Exterior colour cladding must be compatible with natural colours found on the Sunshine Coast such as tan, beige, light blue, light green etc.
- Trim must be consistent with the colour palette of the building
- Exterior cladding must have a matte finish
- Roofing materials and colour must be chosen to ensure there is no glare created by sunlight shining on the roof surface

Windows

- Windows may be glazed for energy efficiency but the glazing shall not result in glare from reflected light

Height of the building

- The height of the building must not exceed the slope and set back requirements of the runway. The ratio is 1:5 therefore for every foot of height, the building must be set back 5 feet from the nearest runway edge.

Roofscapes

- Rooftops should be simple in form with horizontal lines dominating. Rooftops should allow for access of daylight into the buildings.
- Roofs must be shaped and buildings situated so the roofs can withstand high winds

Signage

- Must conform to the District of Sechelt's signage guidelines

Lighting

- All on-lot lighting such as parking lot lighting and external building lights must be hooded to avoid upward glare from lights.

Landscaping

- Avoid the use of turf in landscape design
- Bark mulch is not to be used, pebbles over weed cloth are permitted
- Flowering trees and plants that attract birds are not permitted
- Dense groundcover that provides habitat for rodents is not permitted
- Trees must be selected to ensure that they are not designed to exceed the height restrictions of the site
- Water features with standing water are not allowed
- The principles of Xeriscape shall be adhered to in landscape planning as a means of water conservation

Maintenance Requirements

- Sound maintenance practices should include regular weeding, fertilizing, pest management etc.
- Any turf must be mowed to prevent it from exceeding 2 – 3 inches in height

Drainage

- Lots must be drained to ensure there is no standing water in ditches on the property
- Encourage the use of pebble parking lots or grass block parking surfaces to facilitate drainage.