



**TRUCKEE TAHOE AIRPORT DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTOR STAFF REPORT**

**AGENDA TITLE: Seasonal Control Tower Operations Update and Discussion
Regarding Spring 2018 Tower Operations**

MEETING DATE: January 24, 2018

PREPARED BY: Hardy Bullock, Director of Aviation & Community Services

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Accept this update and guidance on the first month of winter operations of the seasonal air traffic control tower. Discuss and consider funding the tower operation on a continuing basis through the summer of 2018.

DISCUSSION: The tower opened for service on December 15, 2017. The tower manager and most of the summer staff returned. One new controller was added. The tower is open from 7 AM to 6 PM daily. During non-peak periods there is one local controller and one ground controller. During peak periods such as weekends and holidays there is also an Oakland Center coordinator who handles IFR arrivals and departures. The tower is scheduled to close on February 28, 2018.

The primary improvement goals for this operating period focus on reducing annoyance and enhancing safety. A summary of these efforts is listed below.

1. **Standardize the level of service given to airborne traffic when peak periods occur.** We addressed this through the addition of one staff member. We also asked Midwest ATC to provide manager coverage for all weekend and holiday periods. We also changed staffing levels within the hours of operation emphasizing the 4-6 PM period.
2. **Promote the use of calm wind runways 20/02:** A written directive was sent to Midwest ATC promoting the safe use of a calm wind runway program. Criteria was established for using this runway along with runway 11. Traffic pattern changes were made allowing the use of runway 20/02 for repeat touch and go training operations. (See Figure 1 and Attachment 1).

3. **Promote the use of runway 11 to reduce impacts west of the airport:** A written directive was sent to Midwest ATC promoting the safe use of runway 11. Staff and the controllers have worked closely to understand the proper role runway 11 plays in annoyance reduction efforts.
4. **Visual Observations:** Staff has spent 1-3 hours per day in the tower observing controller decision making, traffic pattern flows, and community impacts. Departure procedures and arrival patterns are modified if safely accommodated in response to comments.

The results of these efforts has been a reduction in single event annoyance. Comments for this period are down dramatically. We believe the use of alternative runways is helping diffuse impact away from the west side of the airport toward open space to the east. Clear direction from the airport regarding runway use criteria has enabled more creative, safe use of the available airspace. The dynamic variables that exist when sequencing aircraft can be complicated. The observation period has helped staff and the controllers better understand how to reduce annoyance and what is possible when handling various aircraft. Staff believes that dramatic reductions in annoyance are possible through the work currently underway with the tower.

Another observation by Staff, the controllers, and the pilot community is that the airport, airspace, and the operation function better with a tower in operation. The KTRK airport and airspace are complicated by any standard. This is supported by Oakland Center, the experienced tower controllers and the Midwest ATC Executive staff. To optimize the effect of the tower, it is Staff's opinion that the District should consider in detail opening the tower year around. Cost reduction may be realized by avoiding the stop-start behavior. Additional improvements in control of aircraft may reduce annoyance if controllers can become proficient in the complicated KTRK environment. Additional practice with Oakland Center will help. Incremental annual cost increase may provide exponential benefit. The next tower report will be delivered to the Board on February 28, 2018. Based on observation by staff and others it is recommended that the Board authorize Staff to negotiate a one month continuance for tower services in which time a formal report may be developed for Board review.

WHAT'S NEXT: Staff will present the Winter Tower Operations Report at the March 28, 2018 tower assessment report. For the January 24, 2018 Meeting, Staff will also have a proposal for Board consideration regarding Spring 2018 (March 1 to May 31) Tower staffing from Mid West ATC.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$190,911 for the period from December 15, 2017 through February 28, 2018.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: For this period Staff focused on pilot outreach, chart publications, electronic media such as Foreflight and the FAA Facility Directory. An e-blast and a pilot newsletter went out in late fall and again just prior to the tower opening informing all pilots of the frequencies and operating times.

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1, Flight Track

Attachment 1, Written Directive to Midwest ATC.

