



## TRUCKEE TAHOE AIRPORT DISTRICT - INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
**FROM:** KEVIN SMITH - GENERAL MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** AIRPORT PEAK STAFFING DISCUSSION  
**DATE:** 9/22/2014

**Objective for this Meeting:** The purpose of this memorandum is to begin dialogue between the Board of Directors and staff regarding airport staffing during peak operational periods. With the recent addition of two new Board members, it is appropriate to discuss this issue and arrive at some common ground regarding expectations and final expected peak staffing results. Staff will review peak staffing data, review current practices, consider new opportunities to improve peak staffing, and outline potential constraints. Our aim is to align Board of Director and staff expectations as to a course of action and desired result of peak staffing considerations and potential operational changes.

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**BACKGROUND:** As I researched this item, it is readily apparent that the District has considered peak staffing for some time. It was brought to my attention soon after my hiring that the Board would like a fresh look at this question. Over the past year I have observed operational efficiencies, FBO functions, airfield maintenance, and other airfield operations. I have also researched past practices, and reviewed staffing analysis performed by previous management. There are some interrelationships between total district staffing, our current rates and fees discussion, and peak staffing (See attachment 1). We have provided some data which will assist in understanding when our peak operational periods occur and how this relates to community comments received. We will then review current peak staffing practices, what has been done in the past, and some options to improve this aspect of our operation. As was mentioned in *Objective for this Meeting*, staff would like to discuss and come to a consensus on:

1. A common definition of peak staffing and what are considered peak operational periods.
2. The Board's desired result of enhanced or additional peak staffing.
3. Will Staff suggested initiatives advance Board expectations?

## **OPERATIONS AND COMMENT DATA:**

To assist in our analysis, we have compiled operational data by day of week and compared it with our community comment logs. It shows some interesting but expected trends. We believe it is fundamentally important to understand real operation peaks as opposed to what may be perceived.

As expected, weekends are very busy. We have used departure data to make our assumptions as this is the best data we have right now. Based on a review of our TU 3 through 5 use fees, we know that 83% of these aircraft depart the same day, and many times within hours of their arrival. We can make assumptions on arrivals based on this departure data. Eventually we can use the Flight Tracking System to get better arrival data. Flight Tracking currently doesn't categorize all arrivals as accurate as the WASP system handles departures.

Our analysis shows Sunday as our busiest day of the week followed closely by Friday. Our comment log follows this progression very closely (See Attachments 3 and 4). Saturday followed by Monday are the next busiest days respectively. In addition to these days, Thursday mid to late afternoon at times will also see a spike in arrivals as has been observed by our O&M employees. We should also take into account the seasonal nature of operational peaks in our staffing analysis. Peak operational periods follow a seasonal progression. Memorial Day to Labor Day is considered our summer season with late November to April being our winter ski season. The shoulder seasons are much slower. Based on this data, Friday through Monday should be the focus of our peak staffing analysis. The seasonal nature of our operations should also be considered.

Another peak operational period that should be considered is snow removal events. Operations and Maintenance essentially disregard normal scheduling and optimize staffing to get the airport open as soon as possible. This can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days depending on the event. We then normalize the schedule as we get ahead of the snow event.

## **CURRENT PEAK STAFFING PRACTICES**

While this is the first time we have looked closely at the data related to operational peaks, these results were somewhat expected. The only surprise was Sunday being a little busier than Friday. We currently put a staffing focus on these periods. Fridays and Mondays are very well staffed with several senior staff members working. Our Environment/Tech. Specialist is also working those days and monitors operations and regularly interacts with crews. While the airport is well staffed on Saturday and Sunday we currently do not have a senior staff member assigned to work specifically on these days. However, it is rare for a Saturday or Sunday to pass without a senior staff presence at the airport. Two of the 4 senior staff members live within 5 minutes of the airport. As General Manager, I monitor the airport closely from my home through our camera system and from the maintenance and Unicom radios in my personal vehicle. In addition I am typically at the airport multiple times over a standard weekend and holiday period. I commonly do ramp checks on Saturday and Sunday afternoons as well.

It should not be lost that we do have a Supervisor on duty both Saturday and Sunday. These supervisors are very skilled and have extensive experience in General Aviation. Some may not be aware that Mike

Ketron is a Certificated Flight Instructor (CFII) Instrument in both single and multi-engine airplanes. He is also an Advanced Ground Instructor (AGI). Dave Hoffman is has an Airframe and Powerplant mechanic license and has worked in aviation for many years. Both of these supervisors have many years of general aviation experience and are very capable of interacting with flight crews, transient users, and community members. I should also note that Mike Cooke, one of our senior OM Techs, is also a pilot with both fixed wing and rotorcraft ratings.

As mentioned, while senior staff does not have a specific work schedule for Saturday and Sunday, we do discuss weekend and holiday coverage at each of our senior staff meetings. Senior staff work under a "holiday bank" as time off is considered. Each holiday has to be specifically requested and is reviewed to assure coverage. This is also done with vacation requests. We always make sure at least one senior staff member is in town on all weekends and holidays. Almost without exception there is more than one.

We also staff busy holiday periods such as Labor Day, Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc., with Senior Staff. Our Environment and Technology Specialist usually works the peak periods during these holiday weekends as well.

### **OPTIONS FOR PEAK STAFFING ENHANCEMENTS:**

Having reviewed operational data, current practices, and peak staffing constraints, staff has identified various options to improve and add more flexibility to the peak staffing question. The following are various initiatives and operational changes that I feel will increase efficiencies of staff during peak operational periods.

1. **Additional Staff Training.** As mentioned, we have a highly skilled workforce with significant experience in aviation. Our goal would be to capture this experience and use it to its fullest potential. Starting with our OM Supervisors, we will put an added emphasis on aviation knowledge, resulting in more confidence in discussing our NAP with crews and transient users. It should be noted that they already do this to a degree, but there is potential to do more. We also intend to provide more aviation knowledge to the remainder of our OM Techs working the ramp. This is a skilled staff that is eager to expand their knowledge base. The FY2012 Budget includes a small amount of funds (\$5,000) to assist our current staff of 5 who are pilots to stay current and to then take staff who are not pilots flying. It is interesting to note that many of our current employees have never flown from this airport and do not know what it looks like from the air. This makes it difficult to explain procedures to jet crews and small aircraft transient users. Periodic orientation flights are necessary to build confidence and train our staff to better interact with our users. We will also offer periodic ground schools to staff to learn basic aviation knowledge necessary to work on the ramp and interact with pilots.
2. **OM Supervisors:** Make sure these employees know they are considered management. They should be fully aware that they are in charge of the facility including interaction with constituents and the community along with airport users. Again, much of this is already taking place but some added emphasis may be beneficial.

3. **Schedule Regular Shifts for Senior Management:** This option could be explored. It should be noted that the peak periods on Friday and Monday are already covered by senior staff. A calendar could be created to provide coverage by senior staff for weekends. Another option would be a more formalized senior management schedule to assure peak holiday periods are scheduled well in advance. As mentioned, senior staff is already covering peak holidays and seasonal weekend peaks but this could be more formalized.
4. **Reconsider Hours of Operation:** The question has come up various times as to what type of airport we want to be. We should question again the most appropriate hours for us to staff the airport and FBO. We currently staff the airport from 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM. We may be able to accomplish our Mission and enhance services by redeploying existing staffing and altering our hours of operations. There also may be seasonal shifts in staffing that will be more productive. As we move into the new Airport Administration Building, there will be more options to provide services to airport tenants and users without the necessity of being open until 11:00 PM. Staff is considering a 6:00 AM to 9:30 PM shift in hours of operations. This is explored further in the *What's Next* section of this report.

## **OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS:**

While Senior Staff is very supportive of a detailed peak staffing review, it is important for the Board to consider a few operational considerations. There have been quite a few changes over the past few years. While it may very well be possible to accommodate additional peak staffing options with existing staff and schedule modifications, we should be aware of current constraints and changes in services.

The last total full time employee staffing change occurred in 1999. The District has not increased permanent staffing since this time. In July of 2009, previous management completed an analysis of District staffing (See attachment 5). A few items that probably should be updated are the core missions and regional airport services and staffing comparisons on page 2 and 5 of attachment. While some of the assumptions in the report are arguable, the information contained in the report gives an accurate description of why we are staffed the way we are. Most of it has to do with a 17 hour a day operation, the fact that we run FBO Services, and we operate an independent special district. Any changes to those items could yield significant changes to staff and how we operate.

Another point of consideration is the various projects, responsibilities, tasks, and systems which have been added since 1999. Some of these are:

- Additions of L and M Row Hangars
- Property and Forest Management Functions
- New emphasis on Open Space acquisition
- Steady increase in operations through early to mid 2000s (Has stabilized for past few years.)
- Increase emphasis on noise and annoyance mitigation
- Increase emphasis on community outreach programs (website, newsletter, road show, mobile outreach van)
- Creation and Support of ACAT
- Flight Tracking System
- WASP System
- Multiple new software platforms deployed in past few years
- New policy instructions for rate setting and property management

Staff is always eager to take on new projects and learn new skills. There is a fine balance between staff accepting new systems and tasks and when staff will wave a red flag and say they cannot accept any more new tasks. Staff never wants to say that can't take on a new assignment. We are in no way raising the red flag but want the Board to be aware that we still haven't mastered many of the tasks, programs and projects in the pipeline now. There is a sense of concern from senior staff of adding more tasks and responsibilities without reconsidering other tasks we are currently doing.

Another item of diminutive consideration regarding peak staffing is expected schedules of management employees. There is an expectation in the community and with airport users that management will be available during normal business hours. Regularly scheduled weekend management shifts will take these employees out of the office on more traditional work days making them potentially less accessible. This should not be interpreted as a lack of desire of management to work weekends. As mentioned already, there currently is a management and senior staff presence at the airport on Saturday and Sunday. Independent of the results of this analysis, that will continue.

## **WHAT'S NEXT**

In reviewing the data presented and meeting as management staff, we feel it may be appropriate to make some alterations to our current hours of operation and redeploy existing staff resources. Currently the airport is open and staffed until 11:00 PM. We have identified this late PM shift as an opportunity to make some modifications which may enhance efficiency during peak operational periods. Our plan of action is to reduce operating hours from 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM to 9:30 PM. This will allow our late PM Shift employee to arrive at work 1½ hours earlier, giving more time per day for airfield maintenance, Unicom, and operations assistance in the middle of the day when staff schedules overlap.

There would be no reduction in services to airfield users except the closure of the administration building at 9:30 PM. Most of our aviation and non-aviation groups using our administration building are gone by 9:00 PM. A few may have to make some scheduling adjustments to finish by 9:00 PM. Our self serve fueling facility will be closed at 9:00 PM instead of the current 10:00 PM. Fuel sales between 9:00 PM and 10:00 PM are very infrequent. Our hangar tenants will lose access to the building from 9:30 PM to 11:00 PM but will have access to the 24 hr corridor in the new building which will allow for vending, restrooms and flight planning. Overall, they should be unaffected by this change. If the Board is supportive of this concept, we will reach out to our user groups and communicate our intentions and work hard to resolve any concerns they may have.

As we move to the new building, we intend to outsource all cleaning functions of the new building to Systems 4. Our OM Techs currently spend 1.75 to 2.25 hours per day cleaning. They have done an outstanding job of maintaining our current building but I feel this is a less effective use of their time. We intend to outsource all cleaning and capture this time and redeploy these employees to more important tasks. Our fully loaded employee cost to clean our current building is approximately \$2,100 per month. Outsourcing all cleaning costs for our new larger administration building will be \$1,650 per month. We

feel there is a substantial increase in efficiency by making this change. We will capture 60 man hours a month with this simple change.

The last and possibly most substantial staffing shift currently underway is to reassign all Unicom and point of sale responsibilities to Aviation and Business Services from Operations and Maintenance. We are in the process of moving Mike Cooke and Mike Barrett from the O&M Department to Aviation and Business Services. Their primary focus will be Unicom operations and support of the Aviation and Business Service functions of the District. Staff is in common agreement that the operational demands of Unicom vary greatly by time of day, day of week, and by season. Again, The O&M Department has done an outstanding job with Unicom operations, but overall staff feels efficiency could be increased if this operation was moved to Aviation and Business Services. This Department has more assignments and tasks that are commonly completed in an office environment. Aviation and Business Services can more readily capture hours and better utilize these staffing resources during slow periods and down time at Unicom than the O&M Department. Most O&M Department functions and tasks rely on working outdoors or in the shop.

Redeploying staff in this manor will also allow our current Environment and Technology Specialist to refocus and provide more staff assistance for ACAT, allocate more time to airport environmental and technology issue, community outreach, transient user outreach and technology support. Many of these same functions will also be assigned to the two new employees in this Department. A major benefit to this staffing shift is two additional employees fully trained in the maintenance and upkeep of our monitoring systems (Flight Tracking and WASP).

It is our intention to make this change on a temporary basis, to occur during the same period as our trial period on the new transient use rates and fees policy. We will track operations, unintended consequences, and benefits of this scheduling change, and decide at the end of the trial period if these changes will remain permanent.

Along with the staffing change, we would also implement aspects of items 1, 2, and 3 from *Options for Peak staffing Changes*. Item 1 is already incorporated into the budget.

I acknowledge that some of the proposed and implemented changes may be considered efficiency enhancements, but may not directly address the peak staffing issue. However, we feel that making these efficiency enhancements is an important first step. As we work with the Board to define peak staffing and desired outcomes, we will know how to implement the specific peak staffing enhancements mentioned in this report along with potential operational modifications.

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## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- #1 Staffing Interrelationships
- #2 Comments by Day of Week
- #3 Departures by Day of Week
- #4 2008-2011 Comments vs. Operations

## #5 TTAD Staffing – Missions, Organization, and Comparisons (2009)