



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT  
REGIONAL DISTRICT

## News Release

For Immediate Release

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The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District is moving forward with its plans to improve and integrate its two airport facilities in the Alberni Valley and on the West Coast.

The ACRD operates both the Long Beach Airport (CYAZ) and the Alberni Valley Regional Airport (AVRA). Its plan will see improved scheduled services, support for the aerospace industry and overall increase in air traffic in the region. The strategy includes lighting improvements and advanced GPS navigational aids for both airports and an extension of the AVRA runway.

Currently the AVRA runway is 3,952 feet in length and 75 feet wide. A Runway Extension Pre-design Report commissioned by the ACRD offered three options for improvements. The option chosen by the ACRD would increase the runway to 5,000 feet by 100 feet, add lighting and improved navigational aids at a cost estimate of \$6.2 million. Geotechnical analysis has determined that the current runway can support the aircraft anticipated from the expanded surface.

The improvements will enable the coordination of passenger traffic with the CYAZ when disruptions to service are realized.

ACRD chair Cindy Solda sees this as an exciting project that will bring the ACRD's airports into this century, while offering benefits in the form of business, jobs and increased tourism. The improvements should attract other aerospace companies, private aircraft and possible scheduled service to the Alberni Valley.

"This will be a great economic boost to our region," she said. "It may not be immediate, but we will see the benefits once people learn of the expansion and improvements."

She said already the region has missed out on opportunities because of the limitations of the current airport facilities. Currently the airport in the Alberni Valley is utilized by the Coulson Group of Companies, recreational users, airforce training and a glider operation. She said that is not enough, and the expansion of the runway and the lighting and GPS will mean more businesses and people will choose to use the facilities.

“Economic development manager Pat Deakin is already looking at more ways we can use the airports,” Solda explained. “But if we are going to do this, we have to do it right.”

Solda said that means planning for the future, not just the immediate needs.

The regional district has committed to the development of the business plan and detailed design of the capital improvements. The total project costs will be \$6.2 million at AVRA and \$2.36 million at CYAZ.

The regional district will be seeking funding assistance from the provincial and federal governments through the Small Communities component of the New Building Canada Fund. Success with these grants will drop the local contribution to \$2.067 million for AVRA and \$786,660 for CYAZ. The regional district will also be applying for a \$300,000 grant from the local Community Forest Legacy Fund.

Solda said it is important to have all partners on board, but she believes improving transportation on Vancouver Island should be a key focus. “This project will tie both airports together and it is a positive step for our region, it is opening us up to the world.”

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