Canyonlands Regional Airport Board Meeting Minutes - Approved

Date: 9 February 2026
Location: Grand County Small Conference Room – 125 E. Center Street.
Time Called to Order: 4:01 p.m.

In attendance: William Hawley, Board Chairman; Howard Trenholm, Board Member; AJ Throgmorton, Board Member; Bill Winfield, Grand County Commission; Randy Martin, Board Member; Jason Taylor, Board Member; and Judd Hill, Lochner.

In attendance on Zoom: Rachel Paxman, Board Member; Lori Maughan, San Juan County Commission; and Thorsen Milton, Lochner.

Staff in attendance: Steven Gleason, Airport Director; Dana Van Horn, Commission Coordinator

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Call to Order

The Airport Board meeting was called to order with members and staff introducing themselves for the record, including board members, county and city representatives, airport staff, and engineering consultants.

Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens present to be heard, and no public comments were received.

General Business – Action Items – Discussion and Consideration of Approval

Approval of Minutes

Approval of the January 5, 2026 meeting minutes was postponed due to issues with the minutes not being properly posted.

Discussion Items

OPMA Training

The board completed a required Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training through a short video presentation. The training reviewed definitions of public meetings, notice requirements, closed meeting rules, and recordkeeping obligations. Completion of the training will be submitted for compliance purposes.

Project Reports

Taxi Lanes E, G, F & J

The Airport Board meeting included a series of project updates presented by Judd. He reported that the Taxiway Alpha One Relocation project is currently in the closeout phase, with the team awaiting AGIS survey results and final acceptance from the FAA. The Taxiway Expansion Project has also entered closeout; however, final pavement striping remains outstanding and is scheduled to be completed in the spring when weather conditions permit, after which the project will proceed to full completion. Judd further noted that construction for the Apron Expansion Project, which includes development of a new concrete apron, is anticipated to begin in early to mid-March. Prior to construction, a Rocky Mountain Power agreement must be finalized, and it was confirmed that the required RFR documentation was submitted by Eric earlier that day following his return from training. During the discussion, Judd referenced a color-coded map illustrating project locations, which was not available for display at the time of the meeting; he indicated that the map would be distributed to board members following the meeting. Board members were invited to provide clarification or corrections throughout the update, and no major discrepancies were noted.

Apron Expansion

The Board continued discussion regarding upcoming apron projects. It was noted that the Apron Expansion project is expected to begin soon and will primarily involve significant earthwork, allowing construction to proceed even during pre-paving weather conditions. The Apron Reconstruction project is anticipated to begin in mid to late summer, likely between June and August, and will focus on the area in front of the fuel farm and the county-owned hangars. Coordination between the two projects was discussed, with staff indicating a preference to complete the apron expansion prior to the start of reconstruction to avoid operational conflicts, as the projects will involve separate contractors and simultaneous work could create logistical challenges for airport operations.

Funding considerations were also reviewed. It was confirmed that most project funding is in place; however, additional work involving paving up to the hangars will require further approval, as that portion remains locally funded and not yet fully authorized. For the ARP acquisition, staff indicated that the grant application is complete and ready for submission, and requested that signatures be provided as soon as possible to proceed.

Further discussion addressed the scope and cost of paving an additional 50-foot section near the hangars. It was clarified that this work would extend through areas not addressed in prior construction efforts, completing remaining unpaved or previously unfinished sections. An estimate provided by TSJ indicated a cost of approximately $164,768.43 for this portion of the work. Staff noted that this area is clearly identifiable both on-site and through aerial imagery, as it contrasts with previously completed pavement.

ARFF Truck

The Airport Board discussed several additional project and funding updates related to airport operations and capital improvements. Staff emphasized that the ARFF vehicle grant application is complete and ready for submission to the FAA, pending final signatures from county administration. It was noted that, per current coordination procedures, all documents are being routed through county administration for review prior to submission to the Board Chair. The new ARFF truck will not involve any trade-ins, as the existing certified vehicle will remain in service and the older unit will be retained as a backup. Space constraints within the ARFF station were discussed, with staff noting that while the facility was designed to accommodate multiple vehicles, additional equipment and snow removal assets have created storage challenges. Future evaluation of fleet needs will occur following the hiring of a new operations manager.

Staff also reported on procurement and financing details for the ARFF vehicle. The selected vendor will begin work upon execution of the contract and receipt of a 25% down payment, estimated at approximately $266,000 based on the total cost of $1,064,000. This approach allows the County to avoid costs associated with external financing, such as interest and administrative fees, resulting in an estimated savings of approximately $50,000. The remaining balance will be paid upon receipt of federal grant funding, at which time the County will reimburse itself for the initial outlay. A separate contract for ARFF equipment was awarded but will not proceed until grant funds are secured.

The Board then reviewed the Entrance Road project, noting that a grant application is also ready but pending completion of an independent fee estimate, which is required for federally funded contracts exceeding $100,000. The estimate, expected to cost approximately $3,500, will be reimbursed at 95% through the FAA grant once awarded. The Entrance Road project, along with the ARFF vehicle and Pavement Preservation project, are all identified as FY2026 projects requiring prompt grant application submission.

Discussion of the Pavement Preservation project highlighted anticipated runway and taxiway maintenance, including crack sealing, rubber removal, surface treatment, and repainting of markings. Staff advised that while efforts will be made to minimize operational disruptions, temporary runway and airport closures will be necessary, potentially including overnight work and phased closures over an estimated two-week construction period. The dirt runway will also be unavailable during portions of the project due to access limitations. Advance notice and coordination with airport users will be prioritized to reduce impacts.

Finally, staff noted that planning for FY2027 projects will begin later this year, and a future agenda item will be scheduled to review and discuss those upcoming initiatives. No further project updates were presented at that time.

Reports

County Commission

The Board received a county update summarizing recent coordination efforts and future planning initiatives. It was reported that the County intends to send a formal letter to the CIB expressing appreciation for prior funding consideration while indicating that the funds are no longer needed at this time, with the intent of maintaining a positive relationship for potential future requests. Discussion also briefly revisited the ARFF vehicle financing strategy, reaffirming the County's approach to avoid external loan costs by utilizing internal funds for the initial payment.

The County further announced the formation of an airport subcommittee aimed at increasing communication and engagement between the Airport and County Commissioners. The purpose of this group is to improve understanding of airport operations, reduce potential bias or controversy in decision-making, and guide long-term economic development strategies. This includes evaluating future land acquisition needs, particularly in areas that may be required for taxiway relocation or expansion. The subcommittee will also work to establish a clearer vision for the airport's growth and development, with participation from the County's economic development representative. An initial meeting has been scheduled, and members expressed interest in reviewing comprehensive planning materials, including airport layout maps and supporting visuals, to better inform discussions.

Additional conversation addressed long-term infrastructure considerations, including the potential need for expanded aircraft accommodations. While no runway extension is currently identified in the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), it was noted that future improvements may be driven by changes in aircraft size and service demand. Specifically, existing runway and taxiway separation meets current standards for smaller regional aircraft but would require expansion to accommodate larger, next-generation aircraft. Options previously studied include relocating the taxiway or constructing a new runway, both of which would involve significant cost and construction effort, potentially in the range of $30–40 million. It was emphasized that such upgrades would likely be triggered by increased airline demand or changes in federal requirements.

The Board also discussed operational implications tied to larger aircraft, noting that planes with more than 60 passenger seats would trigger additional federal security requirements, including enhanced screening, badging, and compliance measures. While larger aircraft could potentially operate within current runway dimensions, their introduction would represent a substantial operational shift for the airport. Overall, these considerations were acknowledged as part of a longer-term planning horizon, with further evaluation to occur as part of ongoing coordination between the County, airport staff, and federal partners.

City of Moab

The Board received an update from the City of Moab regarding current projects and regional coordination efforts. City representatives reported ongoing work on several flood mitigation projects, noting that while progress has been made, completion is still pending and may require additional funding. Updates were also provided on Main Street improvements, including the anticipated installation of new garbage cans in the near future. Concrete work in front of the information center has been completed, with crews making visible progress as curing blankets were recently removed and construction continues as planned. Appreciation was expressed to County staff for their support in securing funding for this project.

Further discussion included regional air service development efforts. The City and County have jointly engaged Schmidt & Associates, led by Luke Schmidt, to conduct an economic and air service study in support of the upcoming Essential Air Service (EAS) selection process. The study will analyze passenger leakage to surrounding airports and provide data to guide negotiations with interested carriers. At this time, three airlines have expressed interest in providing service, including Contour Airlines, SkyWest Airlines, and Denver Air Connection. The consultant will assist in evaluating proposals and supporting negotiations as the process moves forward. It was noted that the timeline for this effort is relatively short, with approximately 60 days to advance the study and decision-making process.

Travel Council

The Board received an update from the Travel Council regarding tourism trends and upcoming priorities. Representatives noted that the coming months will help determine the effectiveness of the previous year's marketing strategy, particularly in terms of visitation numbers and overall economic impact. Early indications suggest a solid winter season, and there is optimism for a strong and busy spring.

The Travel Council also indicated that it will be engaging in discussions related to the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, with a focus on identifying options that best support the community from a tourism and economic development perspective. It was noted that the EAS Request for Proposals (RFP) process is already underway, having been released in January, and will follow a relatively short timeline that includes a 30-day submission period followed by a 30-day public comment period. As a result, additional information on airline applicants and service proposals is expected to be available by the next Airport Board meeting.

Board members discussed potential air service routes and community preferences, including interest in connections to larger hub airports. In particular, service to Salt Lake City International Airport was highlighted as a frequently requested option due to its growing passenger traffic and connectivity. However, it was also noted that historical data showed stronger performance for service to Denver, even though Salt Lake City remained a popular preference among travelers. These considerations will be part of the broader evaluation as the EAS process moves forward.

Airport Director

The Airport Director provided an update on the Essential Air Service (EAS) process and related airport operations. He reported that meetings have been conducted with the three primary airlines expressing interest in serving the airport: Contour Airlines, SkyWest Airlines, and Denver Air Connection. All meetings were described as positive, with each carrier demonstrating strong interest and capability, resulting in what staff believes will be three competitive and viable service options for the community.

Board members were invited to attend upcoming airline visits to the airport, where they will have the opportunity to meet company representatives, tour aircraft, and ask questions. SkyWest Airlines is scheduled to visit on February 17 at 12:30 p.m., bringing a CRJ-550 aircraft for demonstration of its proposed Salt Lake City service, while noting a different aircraft would be used for Denver routes. Contour Airlines will visit on February 18 at 2:00 p.m., and Denver Air Connection is expected on February 19, with a tentative arrival time of 9:30 a.m., pending final confirmation. Staff emphasized the importance of these visits as an opportunity for stakeholders to engage directly with airline leadership and better understand service proposals.

The timeline for the EAS process was reiterated, with the Request for Proposals (RFP) having been released on January 30, followed by a 30-day submission period and a subsequent 30-day public comment period. A final decision is anticipated near the end of March, with the current service contract extending through September 30, allowing time for a transition if a new carrier is selected. It was also clarified that although the RFP was issued concurrently with other regional airports, including Vernal and Page, each airport's selection process remains independent.

Additional clarification was provided regarding airline partnerships. It was noted that Contour Airlines maintains interline agreements with major carriers such as United Airlines, American Airlines, Alaska Airlines, and JetBlue, allowing passengers to book connecting travel seamlessly through those platforms, including baggage transfer. Distinctions between interline agreements and traditional codeshare arrangements were briefly discussed, with further clarification expected during airline presentations.

The Airport Director also reported on staffing updates, noting that the airport is currently down three positions but plans to fill two: an Operations Manager and an administrative role. Several qualified applicants have been identified, and interviews will be conducted in coordination with Human Resources, with the goal of filling these roles promptly to improve operational efficiency and administrative support.

In closing, the Director noted that additional data and updates will be provided at the next meeting once staffing is stabilized and further progress is made in the EAS selection process.

Other Reports for Airport Board

The Board discussed the formation and role of the County's newly established airport subcommittee. It was clarified that the subcommittee is not a public meeting but rather an invitation-only working group consisting of three County Commissioners—Bill, Melodie, and Mary McGann—along with select staff such as the Airport Director and Economic Development Director. The purpose of the subcommittee is to better educate commissioners on airport operations and issues, develop strategic direction, and later report findings and recommendations back to the full Airport Board. Board members were advised that broader involvement will occur after initial direction is established.

Discussion then turned to improving future meeting organization and agenda planning. It was agreed that upcoming agendas will more clearly list individual project items, including EAS updates, pavement maintenance, and long-term planning for 2027 and 2028 projects. Board members were encouraged to submit agenda items in advance. Additionally, recently approved federal infrastructure funding opportunities for airports will be researched further to determine potential applicability to local projects.

Staff outlined several action items, including distribution of a project map and EAS presentation materials to Board members, as well as preparation for the next meeting scheduled for March 2. It was noted that due to ongoing hiring efforts, administrative support may again be provided on a temporary basis until a new hire is in place and trained in open meeting requirements and meeting management systems.

The Board also requested that updates on pending hangar development projects be included in future agendas, noting that multiple leases have been signed and additional prospective tenants are in discussion. Potential funding opportunities through Transient Room Tax (TRT) grant programs were mentioned as a possible resource for mitigation-related projects.

Logistical details were confirmed for the upcoming airline visitations as part of the EAS selection process. These informal sessions will be held at the airport terminal and are open to Board members and stakeholders. The scheduled times are as follows: SkyWest Airlines on February 17 at 12:30 p.m., Contour Airlines on February 18 at 2:00 p.m., and Denver Air Connection on February 19 at 9:30 a.m. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet airline representatives, tour aircraft, and review presentations.

Finally, a representative from San Juan County expressed interest in continued collaboration with Grand County on regional airport and economic development efforts. Board members welcomed the partnership and encouraged participation in upcoming airline meetings to help demonstrate regional support for air service.

Future Considerations

The Board Chair called for any additional future considerations. Hearing none from the members present, no further items were brought forward for discussion.

Adjournment: 5:15 p.m.