

Wings Over Humboldt County

Charting a New Course for the Department of Aviation

Released July 30th, 2025

SUMMARY

Air transportation is vital to remote counties. Humboldt County operates six airfields that provide more than just passenger flights. The County depends on them for emergency airlifts, disaster relief, air support for wildfire suppression, package delivery, and personal and commercial use by private pilots. How the County operates airports has changed significantly in the ten years since the Grand Jury last reported on the County airports. The 2018 departmental reorganization and the abrupt resignation of the Director of the Department of Aviation in 2024 prompted the current Grand Jury to take another look at the airports.

In 2018, the Department of Public Works division responsible for airports was moved into an independent Department of Aviation. This transfer resulted in improved financial controls and allowed the Department to eliminate the backlog of required Federal Aviation Administration reports. The narrower focus of the new Department resulted in the hiring of a Director and Airport Operations Manager with extensive aviation experience.

The Board of Supervisors announced in late May that the Director of Aviation position, vacant since September, has been filled. The new Director should join the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors in their current review of certain aspects of airport operations. A roadmap for this review can be found in part in the 2017 report from contractor Volaire Aviation Consulting.

Some Volaire report recommendations were implemented at the time (such as the split from Public Works), while others have yet to be implemented. Volaire suggested changes to the Aviation Advisory Committee, noting that the committee's charter has not been updated since 2011. Another recommendation covered the need to repurpose or perhaps even close some of the smaller airports.

To survive and expand, the Department needs to function like a private business by operating as an Enterprise Fund. This means that most airport operations are funded by user fees and charges rather than general tax revenue; ideally all operating costs are covered by incoming revenue. This is especially important for the biggest airport in McKinleyville, currently named "California Redwood Coast – Humboldt County Airport"

The Department should continue to promote economic development in collaboration with the Humboldt Division of Economic Development in a partnership called Project SOAR ("Sourcing Opportunities for Airport Revenues"). Two key tasks are to develop non-aeronautical land parcels at the airports to generate revenue, and to continue efforts to bring in new air service to Seattle and other northern destinations.

What has not yet improved since the Department's 2018 reorganization is the condition of hangars rented by the general aviation community at the smaller airports. Continual deferment of maintenance of these plane storage facilities is the byproduct of having (reasonably) focused on safety improvements at all airports. Nonetheless, private pilots deserve fully functional hangars in exchange for rent paid.

BACKGROUND

Humboldt County Airports

The Humboldt County Department of Aviation operates six airports that vary in size and function. Department staff are responsible for maintenance at all airports as well as making improvements when funds are available.

“California Redwood Coast – Humboldt County Airport” is the formal name¹ for the largest of the six airports, which was built in the early 1940s. Located in McKinleyville and sometimes more simply referred to by its airport code ACV, this airport serves both commercial and general aviation. General aviation is the term for the non-commercial aviation operations such as recreational flying and business aviation. ACV and the other five airports are all open for general aviation.

On the commercial side, ACV is the County's only airfield with regularly scheduled passenger flights. United Airlines flies to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Denver. Avelo currently flies to Burbank. The other commercial activity in the county is by package carriers UPS and FedEx with operations at Murray Field and ACV.

The other five County-operated airports are Murray Field (built in 1919), Rohnerville Airfield (1947), Garberville Airport (1950), and two remote landing strips in Dinsmore (1956) and Kneeland (1964).

Facility details and history for all six airports are provided in Appendix A.

Commercial Air services

Humboldt County's isolated location and small population are key factors limiting the availability of commercial flights. Isolated regions sometimes must offer time-limited subsidies to airlines to establish passenger service.

Commercial flights at ACV lacked promotion until 2003 when the Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC) initiated recruitment and secured funding to attract airlines and increase the number of destinations. The County has used minimum-revenue guarantees on more than one occasion to attract airlines to commit to adding new destinations.

¹ Name prior to 2013 was “Arcata-Eureka”. It is often called the Arcata airport, or the McKinleyville airport.
<https://www.northcoastjournal.com/NewsBlog/archives/2013/05/28/the-new-airport-name-is-a-real-mouthful>

Formation of the Department of Aviation

Prior to 2018, all airports were managed as a division of the County Department of Public Works. A series of events led to the establishment of the independent Department of Aviation:

- 2015 - The Grand Jury issued a report critical of airport operations.
- 2016 - The Board of Supervisors contracted with aviation consulting firm Volaire to evaluate airports.
- 2017 - Volaire issued a series of reports with findings and recommendations.
- 2018 - The FAA informed Humboldt County that the FAA would claw back just over \$50 million in grant funding if the County did not properly document how funds were spent.
- 2018 - The Department of Aviation was formed and began rectifying FAA compliance concerns.

The 2017 findings by contractor Volaire Aviation Consulting are known collectively as the Volaire report.² Many recommendations were made by Volaire; one was that the Aviation Division become a separate Department because operating and maintaining a commercial enterprise is not representative of the Public Works' primary functions. Some aspects of Aviation operations needed expansion and improvement to become sustainable, and this would be best accomplished by an independent Department of Aviation.

DISCUSSION

The Humboldt County Department of Aviation provides key economic benefits and services to Northern California. Each of the six airports provides unique purposes and opportunities. Two airports in outlying areas of Humboldt County are used relatively rarely but are valuable as CAL FIRE staging areas and for medical air flights to hospitals.

Air Services

Commercial air travel is the principal purpose of ACV. Passenger counts for the years 2002 through 2024 are listed in Appendix B. Using a trendline, these numbers show a gradual increase over time, even with the significant decline during 2020 because of the Covid pandemic.

Because of Humboldt County's relatively remote location, air travel is an essential means of transportation, making ACV a critical component of the County's infrastructure. Currently, there are commercial flights to Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Burbank. These allow for reasonably convenient connections to other destinations, except for those heading north.

With one flight east and three flights south, there is good coverage in those directions. Ideally there would also be a direct flight from ACV to the north, to Portland or Seattle. Currently, flying anywhere to the north requires first making a connection at another airport. Even using

² The County often contracts with Volaire, most recently they studied 2024 passenger retention at ACV.

the closest connection (San Francisco) adds almost 600 miles to the trip plus time for the layover. A recent report³ showed that less than 25% of Humboldt residents flying to Seattle begin their journey at ACV; the majority fly out of Medford.

The County is working on expanding air service to Seattle. The Department of Aviation has \$1.25 million (\$850k federal grant⁴ plus \$400k local match) that will be used as a minimum revenue guarantee to attract a carrier (likely Alaska Airlines) to serve ACV. Adding flights to new locations is a time-consuming and extremely difficult undertaking; the Department has many priorities that compete with this effort.

Many of those competing priorities were addressed in the Inter-Departmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the Department of Aviation entered into with the Humboldt County Economic Development Division in August 2021.

According to the terms of the MOU, the goal of the collaboration was “... enhancement and improvement of economic autonomy and sustainability for the California Redwood Coast – Humboldt County Airport (ACV) and other County operated airports located throughout the county.”

The new collaboration was called Project SOAR, an acronym for “Sourcing Opportunities for Airport Revenues.” Project SOAR superseded an earlier volunteer group called Fly Humboldt, formed and led by the Redwood Region Economic Development Commission starting in 2003.

Fly Humboldt’s primary focus was bringing in additional air service, specifically recruiting new airlines and new destinations to and from ACV. However, under Project SOAR, increasing air service is just one of multiple goals.

Under the terms of the Inter-Departmental MOU, SOAR has 13 principal priorities and multiple secondary priorities, all under three broad headings:

- Airport marketing, branding, and promotion
- Commercial lease assistance
- Development assistance

As of May 2025, the Project SOAR website lists three projects completed: a new website for the airport, recruiting a café at the airport, and installing digital advertising opportunities in the airport terminal.

³ Volaire Aviation Consulting, Leakage and Retention Study, 2025 (data for second quarter of 2024)
<https://humboldt.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13777802&GUID=2F5DE129-3FF7-435E-AC64-7F9635488696>

⁴ US Department of Transportation grant (awarded in 2022)
<https://kymkemp.com/2022/08/05/departement-of-aviation-receives-small-community-air-service-development-program-grant/>

Given that the Department of Aviation is designated as an Enterprise Fund, it should operate in a way that is self-sustaining, just as a business does. It may be more effective from an economic development perspective to partner with private sector organizations that specialize in the different areas currently under Project SOAR's very broad mandate.

Department of Aviation Leadership

The Volaire report identified a backlog of maintenance, repair issues, and an unclear chain of command across Humboldt County's six airports.

Voltaire recommended creating a vision and mission statement with core values to be reviewed by the Aviation Advisory Committee and adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The mission statement should incorporate departmental aspirations for financial viability, community partnership, and economic development.

Other key recommendations outlined in the Voltaire report have been successfully implemented, leading to many positive outcomes, including the reorganization and hiring aviation-experienced managers.

In 2018, the Board of Supervisors transferred oversight of Public Works Aviation Division operations to a newly created Department of Aviation.

That year, the County hired a Director of Aviation with a strong background in airport operations. With these recommended actions implemented, both fiscal control and departmental organization improved. The Director then hired a very experienced Operations Manager who currently oversees all ground operations at ACV and manages maintenance of the other five airfields and structures.

The Director prioritized many recommendations from the Voltaire report. A new Department accounting system facilitated the transfer of data from Public Works. That data included incomplete financial statements and a backlog of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) required reports.

In September 2024 the Director of Aviation resigned. While the Director position was vacant, County staff provided oversight of the Department, and they also continued working on many of the previous Director's initiatives.

With the assistance of a firm that specializes in aviation hiring, the County conducted a nationwide search for a new Director of Aviation. In May 2025, the Board of Supervisors filled the vacant position.

The Department is primarily focused on compliance with public safety FAA regulations. This, along with a reduced number of staff, contributes to less frequent maintenance at the five other airports and less time available for non-safety related repairs.

Maintaining compliance with the Federal Aviation Administration is critically important - and is legitimately the highest priority for Aviation management. Time spent preparing required FAA reports combined with a vacant Director position, temporarily put on hold other long-range projects designed to help secure the Department's continued prosperity.

This is important because the Department operates under an Enterprise Fund; it should generate revenue to cover operating costs rather than rely on the County General Fund. In short, it should operate like a business. See Appendix C for an explanation of Enterprise Funds.

Federal Aviation Administration

Regular reporting by the Department of Aviation management ensures that all FAA regulations are met. This is extremely important for two reasons: Public safety is of utmost concern to the County, and the FAA grants significant amounts of money to implement safety improvements. Grant funding is crucial for a small rural commercial airport like ACV to stay current with new safety protocols and appropriately maintain the airport for public benefit and safe air travel.

In 2018, the FAA threatened to seek the return of just over \$50 million in grant funding because required reporting was severely lacking. Once established, the Department of Aviation spent several months working through a backlog of incomplete paperwork to comply with overdue FAA reporting and fiscal management requirements. Safety of the flying public is paramount, and Department staff are attuned to the need for staying in compliance. This was emphasized in written documentation and oral testimony during several interviews conducted by the Grand Jury.

A recent example of the significance of FAA funding occurred in September 2024 with the Board of Supervisors' acceptance of four significant grants. These total \$1,893,844 to fund an Airport Infrastructure Program. Grant details are listed in Appendix D.

Aviation Advisory Committee

The County's first Aviation Advisory Committee was formed in 1999, when the airports operated as a Division of Public Works. The committee structure was last modified in 2011, before Aviation became a separate Department. The intent was to provide civilian oversight and assistance to Public Works Divisional staff. Many committee members are experienced pilots wishing to ensure that general aviation individuals and airfields are not overlooked when most attention focuses on the commercial airport.

The nine committee members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. With a full-time Director of Aviation in place, the committee has the potential to be a very powerful and useful source of help for long-term strategic planning for the airports. However, the Grand Jury has observed significant tension between the Committee and the Department of Aviation.

The Committee does not appear to be functioning effectively. One example is that the committee has tended to focus on day-to-day operations rather than looking at longer-term opportunities such as economic development and projects to enhance the private pilot experience

while using the smaller airfields and hangars. The Grand Jury does not criticize or blame the committee or Department staff for this. The committee lacks proper training for members, and the dated original charter is vague on specific member roles. These shortcomings diminish the committee's effectiveness and its potential benefit to the community.

The Volaire report recommended restructuring the Advisory Committee by supplementing private pilots' expertise with individuals experienced in economic development and business. On this point, the report states:

Some current committee members, some County Supervisors, and many business leaders in the region believe the true mission of the Advisory Committee should be to act like a corporate board, providing advice and helping airport system leadership with decision-making. This focus should be on running the airport system like a business, building economic activity and revenue instead of operational issues. The airport system has a staff of experts to handle operational issues, but business advice and acumen would be of greater value.⁵

The Board of Supervisors is currently reviewing and evaluating the committee's purpose and role going forward. One factor to consider is that current members are overly focused on specific aviation issues, neglecting the broader scope of aviation planning for economic stability. Strengthening the committee with a more diverse range of aviation-related topics and ensuring training for members could better align its purpose with the needs of the Department of Aviation.

That said, committee members are passionately devoted to aviation, and they have specific skill sets that collectively benefit the flying public. However, the Grand Jury believes that complementing the current membership to include non-pilots will be beneficial. Generally speaking, advisory committees are composed of members from the public. These committees are structured to provide governing bodies with diverse expertise. Appendix F lists typical primary tasks and responsibilities for committees in general.

Facility and Operational Improvements

The Grand Jury finds that ACV staff are experienced with a good track record for meeting FAA regulatory requirements. This work is instrumental in keeping the commercial airfield open with regular flights.

Recent major improvements at ACV include a newly redesigned public parking lot, resurfaced runways, and upgraded airline parking aprons. Services for passengers, such as a small café, are open.

The independent Department of Aviation has effectively organized financial records and has caught up on overdue FAA filing requirements. The Department also benefits from support from the Board of Supervisors who have commissioned expert consultants to prepare reports covering planning and priorities.

⁵ The full Volaire recommendations regarding the Advisory Committee are in Appendix E

Facilities at the satellite airports are in disrepair as a result of long-term deferred maintenance. Many aircraft hangars no longer have functioning doors. While there may be a plan for their rehabilitation, work is being done only when money and resources become available. Hangar rental income is not reserved strictly for repair of hangars. As a result, repairs keep being pushed off as more critical needs arise.

New hangar rental rates were recently approved by the Board of Supervisors. Rent increases were initiated by an FAA investigation documenting below-market rates for aircraft hangars in Humboldt County. The new rates are causing disgruntlement among some private pilots who are either not clear on why rates are increased, or disagree with the methodology to calculate the new rates.

One consequence of rate increases is the loss of the only fixed-base operator (FBO)⁶ located at Murray Field. This business, Northern Air, provided flying lessons, plane rentals and related services for local private pilots and the public wanting to take flying lessons or charter a small aircraft. Northern Air went out of business in 2022 after being faced with a 550% rent increase (from \$1,536 to \$10,088 per month).

The County decided to soften the effect of increases by using county funds to pay for the inflation component of the rent increase, which could provide approximately \$55,000 toward hangar maintenance. This is unfortunately just a fraction of what is needed to fix the hangars.

Another possible source of savings could be management of an Aviation motor pool. Although the Department Public Works no longer controls the Department of Aviation, it does continue to lease equipment, such as trucks, to the many County departments. Vehicles are necessary, and Public Works has a sufficient pool of vehicles and other items previously used at the airport. As a cost-saving measure, going forward the Department plans to purchase and maintain its own equipment.

One of the County's objectives is for the Department of Aviation to cover annual expenses using airport revenues, not the County General Fund. However, the County does maintain a reserve fund in case there are shortages. The Volaire report had this to say about running the airport as a business:

An ideal governance structure for the Humboldt County Airport System is one that will allow it to run more like a business under the enterprise fund concept. The ideal structure will give the manager of the Airport System direct control over the airports and ensure elected officials oversee major decisions and budget planning. The ideal structure will also speed up the decision-making process by putting more direct power in the hands of those who run the Airport System and understand its unique challenges and opportunities.

⁶ FBO: an organization granted the right by an airport to operate on-site to provide aeronautical services.

Potential Repurposing of Airports

Does the County need to operate all six airports? Costs could probably be reduced by repurposing one or more of the smaller airports. The Volaire report includes several observations:

Because of their location, large number of based aircraft, mix of traffic, and the relatively good condition of their physical plants, Arcata-Eureka Airport (ACV), Rohnerville Airport, and Garberville Airport are the three best positioned airports for the future of the County. Each of the three other airports have major issues that will cause the County to undertake expensive fixes, so they remain safe.

This report is not designed to recommend airport closures. That is beyond the scope. But it is clear the County's leadership will face major decisions regarding Murray Field, Kneeland Airport, and Dinsmore Airport. County must be prepared to solicit stakeholder and constituent input to consider potential airport closures as facilities further deteriorate.

While Kneeland Airport is the only Humboldt County airport "above the fog" it is rarely used by fixed wing aircraft. Instead, it is used for helicopter operations by CalFire and the US Coast Guard. Kneeland's runway has lost dozens of feet of length as the hillside slumps on one end. An endangered plant habitat is at that (slumping) end of the runway, so a large environmental study will be required before it can be repaired. The repair, itself, could be a seven-figure project.

Similarly, the Van Duzen River is eating away at the south side of the Dinsmore Airport threatening to take part of the runway with it. This area would need to be shored-up, and the runway potentially re-built over the long-term. Beyond the issues with the River, Dinsmore Airport is surrounded by large trees that continue to grow and now block approaches to both ends of the runway. The Airport is primarily used by medivac helicopters so the trees are not currently a significant problem.

Murray Field is built on wetlands and it is one of the few airports in the United States to sit below sea level. Users of the Airport, which is actually Humboldt County's busiest in terms of takeoffs and landings, report the runway is heaving, sinking, and cracking as are the taxiways. In time, the runway will require a complete re-build in order for it to remain safe. Part of the Airport lies within the purview of the California Coastal Commission which could make runway reconstruction difficult environmentally.

Eventually, Humboldt County will have difficult choices to make about the future of Murray, Kneeland, and Dinsmore airports. The County will either need to invest significant money to re-build runways or re-purpose each airport. Kneeland and Dinsmore could be converted to helipads at limited cost. The situation at Murray Field will be the most difficult to address.

Economic Development

The Volaire report discussed ways the County can develop land and create incentives for new businesses to locate on-site. The Grand Jury learned that there is currently no solid business plan or strategy to utilize or develop the surrounding land for expanded business opportunities.

However, a long-term planning tool does exist. In 2025, Humboldt County hired Lochner Armstrong⁷ to update the Airport System Plan, which involves taking inventory of all six public-use airports operated by the county. The plan can be used to assess existing facilities and future airport development needs. The Airport System Plan identifies areas designated as non-aeronautical; these areas could potentially be developed to generate revenue.

Several individuals interviewed by the Grand Jury expressed optimism that the new Director of Aviation will focus on economic development opportunities while continuing to make airport improvements.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Aviation operates smoothly. It benefits from hiring Managers with strong backgrounds in airport management. Economic pressures and potential cuts to FAA funding in the current and future fiscal years may affect grant funding income.

The Board of Supervisors and the first Director of Aviation implemented some of the most critical recommendations identified in the Volaire report, but several recommendations should still be considered for implementation. The Volaire report remains relevant and should be reviewed again by the Board of Supervisors and the new Director of Aviation. This activity should continue, allowing the Department to develop a stronger economic position.

Filling the vacant Director position and amending the role of the Aviation Advisory Committee are two critical steps moving forward. The first step has been completed, and the second step is in process. The new Director will start in June, and the Board of Supervisors is currently evaluating the roles and composition of the Advisory Committee.

FINDINGS

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury finds that:

F1: Creating a Department of Aviation has improved operations and management, thus providing greater opportunity for growth and revenue.

⁷ Lochner summary: <https://www.flyacv.com/DocumentCenter/View/422/Airport-System-Plan-Summary-with-Overview-and-Recommended-Developments>

F2: Aviation management and staff are well qualified and experienced, ensuring that facilities and operations are maintained for public safety.

F3: Compliance with Federal Aviation Administration requirements is critical for the Department of Aviation to successfully apply for and receive grant funds to undertake major safety projects at all six airports.

F4: In 2024, the Department of Aviation was awarded Federal Aviation Administration grant funding of just under \$1.9 million. This allowed the Department to make capital improvements at the airports in Rohnerville, Garberville and McKinleyville.

F5: Commercial air service is currently available to the east and south. Establishing air service to the north would result in increased revenue because passengers would be less likely to start their journey at another airport.

F6: The Department of Aviation has been collaborating with Project SOAR (Sourcing Opportunities for Airport Revenues). This promotes economic development at the airports. **(R1)**

F7: The focus of the current Aviation Advisory Committee has primarily been on airport operations. The committee could be better utilized by focusing on broader economic development. **(R2)**

F8: The Dinsmore landing strip is threatened by river encroachment. This necessitates constructing a dike to protect the runway or repurposing the site solely as a medivac heliport. **(R3)**

F9: Landslides have shortened the effective length of the Kneeland landing strip. Restoration will require an environmental impact report and repairs likely costing millions of dollars. **(R3)**

F10: Murray Field Airport is below sea level and sinking. In the long term, the airport will need to be either closed or reconstructed; reconstruction would require obtaining a California Coastal Commission permit. **(R3)**

F11: Many of the 2017 Volaire report recommendations have been implemented, but several could still be implemented. Revisiting those recommendations would provide opportunities for expansion, commercial development, increased public safety, and increased revenues. **(R4)**

F12: Airport hangars and other infrastructure at the smaller airports are in disrepair due to long-term deferred maintenance. Delaying repairs accelerates damage and can significantly increase the final cost of repair, as well as foster dissatisfaction among hangar tenants. **(R5, R6)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

R1: The Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Aviation to continue their collaboration with Project SOAR (Sourcing Opportunities for Airport Revenues) to attract revenue-generating businesses to non-aeronautical land at the airports. **(F6)**

R2: The Board of Supervisors continue to evaluate the composition, role and responsibilities of the Aviation Advisory Committee. **(F7)**

R3: The Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Aviation to review the specific 2017 Volaire report recommendations regarding the future of Murray Field, Dinsmore, and Kneeland airports. This direction to Aviation shall be made by no later than December 31, 2025. **(F8, F9, F10)**

R4: The Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Aviation to review the 2017 Volaire report. The Director will report a plan for possible implementation of Volaire recommendations to the Board of Supervisors by no later than December 31, 2025. **(F11)**

R5: The Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Aviation to develop a hangar repair plan, by December 31, 2025, to bring hangars up to commercial standards. **(F12)**

R6: The Board of Supervisors allocate all hangar rental revenue, as well as seek other funding sources as needed to implement the hangar repair plan developed by the Department of Aviation. To be done by June 30, 2026. **(F12)**

RESPONSES

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, each entity or individual named below must respond to the enumerated Findings and Recommendations within specific statutory guidelines.

Responses to Findings shall be either:

- The respondent agrees with the finding; or
- The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding; in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

Responses to Recommendations shall be one of the following:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action; or
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation; or

- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency where applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report; or
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

REQUIRED RESPONSE – WITHIN 90 DAYS

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
(All findings, all recommendations)

Invited Responses

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury also invites the following entities or individuals to respond.

The Humboldt County Department of Aviation
(All findings, all recommendations)

Responses are to be sent to:

The Honorable Judge Kelly L. Neel
Humboldt County Superior Court
825 5th Street, Eureka, CA 95501

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury
PO Box 657, Eureka, CA 95502 A

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

Appendix A –Airports operated by the County of Humboldt

In addition to the California Redwood Coast – Humboldt County Airport in McKinleyville (ACV), Humboldt County operates five general aviation landing strips. All are maintained by Department of Aviation employees. The frequency and scope of work varies based on the types of services provided, mowing area, and other differences. All locations are functional, but not all are monitored on a regular basis by the Department. All airports serve as emergency air transport departure points to out-of-area medical facilities.

ACV – Public Services

United Airlines has flights to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Denver, while Avelo Airlines flies to Burbank. There is a café in the terminal offering a limited selection of food, beginning two hours before the first flight of the day and continuing until two hours after the last flight departs. Passengers driving to the airport can use the recently upgraded parking lot; parking rates range from \$3.00 for the first hour up to a daily maximum of \$16.00. Passengers arriving that need to rent a car can do so from one of four national companies: Enterprise, Avis, Budget, and National.

ACV - History

During World War II, the US Navy determined that dense fog in Humboldt County was ideal for testing instrument landings. The site in McKinleyville was selected by the US Navy. The Navy experimented with defogging systems that proved expensive and of limited benefit. Primarily the Navy used the location to test aircraft using instrument-controlled (ILS) takeoff and landings. The Navy constructed the first ILS system in California at this location. ACV is certified as a zero/zero airport. This allows aircraft to take off and land with zero visibility. However, commercial airlines set higher minimum standards for passenger flights (requiring more than zero visibility).

This photograph shows the airport during World War II as an instrument landing training field for the US Navy. This predates the construction of US Highway 101 and shows the runway extending to the beach. When the highway was relocated from downtown McKinleyville, the runway was shortened to its present configuration.



ACV Circa 1942

The property (745 acres) was deeded to Humboldt County in 1950. It consists of two paved runways. Both are 150 feet wide. The lengths are 4,500 ft and 6,000 ft respectively.



ACV today

Additional five airports operated by the Department of Aviation.⁸

The oldest is Murray Field on US 101 just north of Eureka. It was constructed by local pilot Dayton Murray in 1919 and purchased by the County in 1930. This is a general aviation airport with piston and jet fuel, 56 hangars and tie downs. Package Delivery companies use the airport daily.



Murray Field (EKA)

⁸ Source Material: <https://www.airnav.com/airports/>

Two airports are at inland rural sites. One is the Dinsmore landing strip (1956) and the other is a strip in Kneeland (1964), both with tie-downs. No services are available at these locations.



Dinsmore (D63)



Kneeland (019)

Southern Humboldt is served by Garberville Airport (1950). Shuttle service to the Benbow Inn is available. This general aviation landing strip includes piston and jet fuel, tie-downs, and 15 hangars, and a lounge.



Garberville Airport (O16)

Of the general aviation airports, the County's widest and longest runway is the Rohnerville Airfield (1947). This mid-county facility is a critical asset for the North Coast Region. Rohnerville serves as a base for CAL FIRE firefighting aircraft including fire suppression air tankers and spotter aircraft. The airport can also serve larger aircraft in emergencies and for medical evacuations. There are 18 county-owned hangars, tie-downs, piston and jet fuel, and the CAL FIRE Air Attack Base.



Rohnerville Airport (FOT)

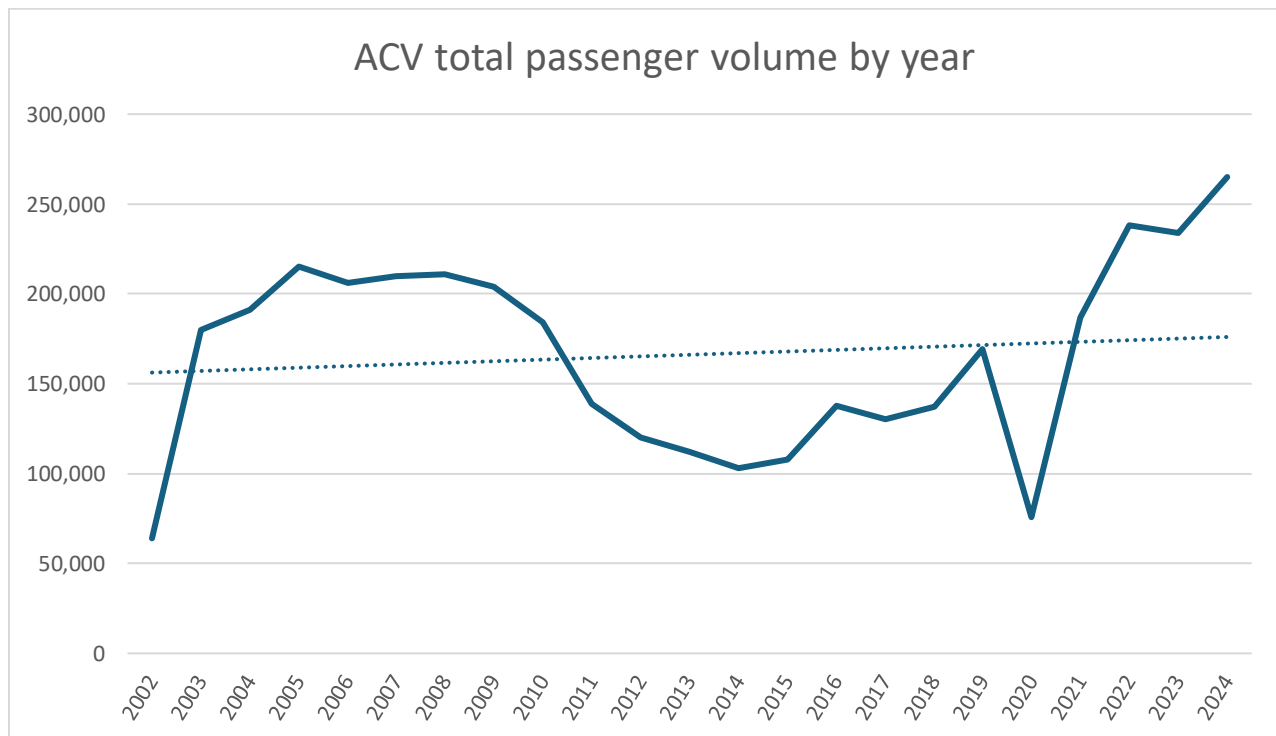
Appendix B –ACV passenger counts

Departures by destination for most recent full year

January – December 2024

1.	<u>San Francisco, California</u>	63,040	United
2.	<u>Burbank, California</u>	28,370	Avelo
3.	<u>Los Angeles, California</u>	21,730	United
4.	<u>Denver, Colorado</u>	20,350	United
5.	<u>Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	160	Avelo *

* Note: Avelo discontinued service to Las Vegas in January 2024



Total passenger volume data (in thousands) used in the above chart

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Passengers	64	180	191	215	206	210	211	204	184	139	120	112

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Passengers	103	108	138	130	137	169	76	187	238	234	265

Appendix C - Enterprise Funds

In California an enterprise fund is a type of governmental accounting fund used to account for activities that are like private business enterprises, such as utilities or airports. These funds are typically self-sufficient, meaning they generate their revenues through user charges rather than relying on general tax revenues.

Key characteristics of enterprise funds:

- **Self-Sufficient:**

Enterprise funds are designed to be self-supporting, meaning they generate enough revenue through user fees to cover their operating costs, including capital expenses like depreciation and debt service.

- **Separation of Accounting:**

Enterprise funds have their own accounting and financial reporting system, separate from the general fund of the government.

- **Business-like Operations:**

They operate in a manner similar to private sector businesses, with a focus on cost recovery through user charges.

- **Periodic Revenue and Expense Determination:**

Enterprise funds are often used for activities where it is important to determine revenues and expenses regularly for managing capital, controlling costs, and making public policy decisions.

- **Examples:**

Common examples include utilities (water and sewer), airports, transit systems, and golf courses.

NOTE: Summarized from several online law offices, League of California Cities report for Rocklin, State Controller's Office, and California Code, and Government Code - GOV § 25261

Appendix D - Airport Improvement Projects for Public Safety

Accepted grants from the United States Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program:

- 3-06-0092-014-2024 Grant Award of \$247,073
Garberville Airport – Rehabilitate Runway 18/36, Taxiways, and Aircraft Parking Apron.
- 3-06-0010-060-2024 Grant Award of \$883,043
McKinleyville Airport (ACV) – Reconstruct or Relocate Taxiway.
- 3-06-0010-061-2024 Grant Award of \$404,489
McKinleyville Airport (ACV) – Rehabilitate or Reconfigure the Commercial Aircraft Parking Apron.
- 3-06-0083-014-2024 Grant Award for \$359,275
Rohnerville Airport – Rehabilitate Runway 11/29.

Appendix E – Advisory Committee Recommendations

Discussion and recommendations from the Volaire report:

Humboldt County Airports Division Governance Structure Analysis

GOAL FOUR: RE-STRUCTURE THE AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Even members of the current Aviation Advisory Committee believe it should be re-structured to better match a new Airport System mission to run like a business and help to develop the regional economy. Most interviewed for this report said the Committee should be made up of business and community leaders.

As noted in this report, other California airports with advisory committees use those committees to bring in a wide range of regional perspectives to airport planning. Humboldt County is currently unique in that it places an operational focus on the committee, rather than a business focus. It is recommended the County transition the focus away from pilots and their perspectives on the airports to regional leadership and a focus on leveraging the airports for economic growth.

It is recommended the Aviation Advisory Committee be re-structured to include seven members, down from the current nine. The current Committee has trouble obtaining a quorum for meetings, which indicates it has too many members. It is also recommended that, instead of all members being appointed by the Board of Supervisors, certain positions be attached to positions within other community organizations.

The new Committee should include the following permanent positions appointed by the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Humboldt County Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director
- 2) Economic development representative from one of the region's agencies and/or cities
- 3) Chamber of commerce representative from one of the region's agencies and/or cities

The new Committee should also include the following positions appointed by the County's Board of Supervisors, based on the requirements of each position. Each of these appointees shall be nominated to the Supervisors by the Airport System:

- 1) Airline Representative: A locally-based representative of a scheduled passenger or cargo airline serving one of the County's airports;
- 2) Aviation Tenant Representative: A tenant at one of the County's airports;
- 3) Local Business Representative: A leader at a local firm with an interest in the airports;
- 4) Financial Representative: A leader at a bank, investment firm, or accounting firm.

The bylaws of the new Committee should specify that no more than three of the seven members of the Committee shall be pilots, whether they have aircraft based at airports within the County or not. This will reduce the chance of a conflict of interest.

The authors of the report did consider the outright elimination of the Aviation Advisory Committee, removing a layer of governance and potentially enhancing the on-field decision-making of a professional airports director. However, current federal grant assurances require participation with users and affected parties; this is how the county ensures this. Moreover, there is an opportunity to use the re-structured committee to better connect the Airport System to the region and the people the airports are meant to serve.

Appendix F – Generic Advisory Committee Considerations:

County Advisory Committee

A review of Advisory Committees including several California Counties⁹ include the following information.

County advisory committees play a vital role in advising county government on a wide range of issues, from local planning and management to health and public safety. They offer a platform for citizen input, enabling communities to participate in decision-making processes. These committees also serve as a bridge between the county and its residents, ensuring that local concerns and perspectives are considered in policy development.

Elaboration:

- **Advise on Policy:**

County advisory committees provide recommendations to elected officials and county leadership on various issues, including land use, economic development, and county services, according to MRSC.

- **Facilitate Citizen Involvement:**

They offer a structured way for residents to engage with county government, providing opportunities to share their opinions, perspectives, and expertise.

- **Bridge Communication:**

These committees act as a link between the county and the community, ensuring that local concerns are heard and addressed in the policy-making process.

- **Study and Analyze Issues:**

Advisory committees often study specific issues, conduct research, and analyze data to inform recommendations to the county government.

- **Provide Expertise:**

Committee members may bring specialized knowledge and skills to the table, offering valuable insights and advice to the county on complex issues.

⁹ The Municipal Research and Services Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the success of local governments, Sonoma County, Contra Costa County, Solano County, San Mateo County, Lane County (Oregon), and Doodle’s Advisory Group Meetings

- **Examples:**

County advisory committees can cover a wide range of areas, such as:

- **Health and Public Safety:** Providing input on health programs, public health initiatives, and emergency management planning.
- **Land Use and Planning:** Advising on zoning regulations, development projects, and regional planning efforts.
- **Economic Development:** Providing recommendations on attracting businesses, supporting local economies, and promoting economic growth.
- **Transportation:** Advising on transportation planning, public transit, and infrastructure projects.