

Bond: Measure would pay to fill, grade, pave several acres

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The project

Just south of the Port's airplane hangars is an uneven, grassy patch of land bounded by drainage ditches, with Airport Lane running by to the south.

The Port's bond measure would pay to fill, grade and pave several acres for Life Flight's new station and for future hangars. An access road would be built from Airport Lane to Life Flight's new hangar. Outside the airport fence, Flightline Drive would be extended to a new southern entrance at Airport Lane. Utilities would also be extended to Life Flight and between 6 to 8 acres of adjacent land along Flightline Drive and Airport Lane for future development.

Airport Manager Gary Kobes said there is a lack of such shovel-ready, permitted and wetland-mitigated land, including at the Port's own Airport Business Park.

"If the land is not shovel-ready, then it makes it very (difficult) to work out a deal with somebody," he said. "Typically, they're not going to wait 12 to 18 months to get through the permitting process and then see if they can build their building."

The entire project is estimated at \$1.92 million.

Life Flight will use a \$665,000 ConnectOregon infrastructure grant and its match of \$285,000 to build a hangar and crew quarters staffed 24 hours a day with nurses, medics, mechanics and pilots. The hangar would be big enough for Life Flight's helicopters and a Pilatus PC-12 turboprop airplane for when the weather is too cold for helicopters.

Preferred site

The southern site has received recommendations from Life Flight officials, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Port's Airport Advisory Committee, which includes members from the Port Commission, staff, private aviation, Lektro and the U.S. Coast Guard. The group, which reviewed five proposed sites around the airport's tarmac, said the southern site eliminates any dangers posed by airplanes and helicopters intermingling, while providing the quickest access for Life Flight to the run-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Gary Kobes, the airport manager at the Port of Astoria, looks out over a proposed site to relocate the Life Flight Network.



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

A plane flies over the Astoria Region Airport. The proposed Life Flight hangar would be built to the left of the row of white buildings.

way and for emergency vehicles to Life Flight.

"It's probably the quietest place on the airport, which is not particularly quiet," Kobes said.

He said Life Flight's current location can face up to 90 decibels of noise from industrial fans at Lektro. When the weather is bad, Life Flight crews must travel a quarter mile

to reach a helicopter in a rented hangar on the other side of the airport's tarmac, adding several minutes to response times.

Justin Dillingham, chief customer officer for Life Flight, said the recommended location would allow faster response times and a safer place for take-offs and landings. "We support the Airport Advisory Committee's recommendation to be on

the south end of the airport," he said.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson and former Astoria Mayor Willis Van Dusen are backing the Coastal Air Medical Protection PAC, a political action committee supporting the bond measure.

Division

Life Flight has received

broad support for its new hangar, including letters of recommendation from most cities and hospitals in the region. But the larger bond measure has drawn strong opposition from some Port commissioners and candidates who call it speculative development.

Commissioner Bill Hunsinger took out an ad in The Daily Astorian accusing Port staff of using Life Flight's popularity to trick voters into giving money to a project that benefits special interests, including Commissioners John Raichl and James Campbell, who hangar planes at the airport.

While Port Commission candidates Dirk Rohne, Frank Spence and Campbell have supported the bond measure, their opponents — Dick Hellberg, Pat O'Grady and Commissioner Stephen Fulton — have come out in opposition. They argue the Port can more cheaply accommodate Life Flight elsewhere and should focus development on marine industrial operations that earn more revenue.

Fulton, who originally voted to move forward with a bond, has since changed his mind and presented several alternatives, from evicting another airport

tenant from a private hangar to moving the airport's fuel farm to accommodate Life Flight's hangar. Each of his ideas have been dismissed by the Airport Advisory Committee as causing issues between Life Flight and other airport operations.

Fulton works for the Nygaard timber family, which owns undeveloped land south of the airport.

Raichl, who is not running for re-election, said the Port gets some collateral benefits from the bond measure, but that the bond is meant to help properly site Life Flight. The improved infrastructure on Flightline Drive, he said, will also benefit other companies operating at the airport. "I think it's a benefit for everybody."

Van Dusen said opposition to the bond seems focused on the possibility of a cheaper location for the hangar that doesn't exist without causing issues for Life Flight and other airport users.

"If the bond fails, then the Port Commission will have the responsibility to find another way to fund the preferred location," Van Dusen said. "Or they're going to put (the hangar) in a less expensive location that I do not think is adequate."

Couple: Taxi has disco ball for nighttime use

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Tongue Point, but he still felt lonely. On most days back in Ghana, much of his free time involved him visiting neighbors' homes, usually unannounced. He soon found, though, that Americans tend to focus much of their leisure hours on family and, after making concrete plans, close friends.

"You can become friendly with people, but you just have to be cautious," Afororpe said.

Afororpe eventually landed a job at Fred Meyer in early 2004. He also moved on to work at Necanicum Village Senior Living Community in Seaside and then Costco until last summer.

Waiting for a bus

He was standing inside the coffee shop last May when

he noticed a number of people waiting on the sidewalks along 10th Street between Marine Drive and Duane Street. They had come from a cruise ship docked at a nearby pier and were waiting for a bus to take them to the Astoria Column.

Afororpe said that when he approached a nearby business owner to see what they could do, the owner said, "Don't mind them."

"I was speechless," Afororpe said. "I heard people saying, 'This is a very bad experience.' They then could go back to the ship and write a very bad review. It doesn't mean all Astorians are like that."

A family of five entered the coffee shop that same day to grab some food and coffee while they waited. A man then asked if Afororpe would be willing to give him

and his family a ride to the Astoria Column. Sensing the cruisers were developing a sour taste from their experience in Astoria, Afororpe obliged.

"If he ever comes back, we'll make sure we have a ride for him and his family," Afororpe said.

Less than a month later, Afororpe registered the Downtown Coffee Shop taxi, which he now drives full time. He gives rides to travelers throughout Clatsop County, Pacific County, Washington, and to the Portland area. The Cadillac includes the Downtown Coffee Shop logo on its side and a disco ball on the inside for nighttime use.

"I just wanted to do something different," he said.

Afororpe said fake orders hampered his taxi-driving business in the beginning. He would receive prank calls

and online orders in more distant parts of the county where customers wouldn't show up. To curb those issues, customers ordering from locations 20 miles away or more from Astoria must pay in advance with a credit card.

Now that he's settled in, Afororpe will continue to build his businesses until he can hire drivers to log miles on the road for him. Locals have come to know his story and have been supportive, Afororpe said.

"I'll continue to operate until I'm well-established," he said. "I'm traveling all the time."

— Jack Heffernan



Jack Heffernan/The Daily Astorian

Richard Afororpe stands by his Downtown Coffee Shop taxi.

Cutters: Haven't yet been named

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men and women in our community, is a great thing," he said.

The Coast Guard has been looking at the 17th Street Dock or Tongue Point for the new cutters, but an official said a decision has not been made on where in the city the cutters will homeport.

The new cutters have not been named, according to the Coast Guard, but others in the class have been named for enlisted personnel who distinguished themselves.

The first fast response cutter based on the West Coast, and the 21st pressed into service

overall, was the John McCormick in Ketchikan, Alaska. The cutter is named after a former officer-in-charge of the wooden 52-foot motor lifeboat Triumph out of Station Point Adams. McCormick was awarded the Coast Guard's Gold Lifesaving Medal for maneuvering the Triumph against a strong current and into the breakers to pick up a crewman who fell overboard on March 26, 1938.

Of the 58 fast response cutters, 38 have been ordered. A second fast response cutter will be commissioned in Ketchikan in June. The cutters are designed to patrol coastal areas, with an endurance of five days and a maximum speed of

28 knots.

The new cutters are replacing the Island-class patrol boats. One of the patrol boats, the Orcas, will continue to operate in Coos Bay until the new cutters arrive in Astoria in 2021.

The Coast Guard's Sector Columbia River headquarters and Air Station Astoria are based at the Astoria Regional Airport in Warrenton. Astoria is also home to the Coast Guard's 210-foot medium endurance cutters Steadfast and Alert, and the 225-foot buoy tender Fir, but does not have one of the Island-class patrol boats.

Astoria was designated a "Coast Guard City" in 2010.



Nurse DeVaney

for Clatsop Health District, Position 3

My name is **Jacqueline DeVaney**. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and have been an RN for over six years. I am running for the Clatsop Health District, which oversees the Clatsop Care Health and Rehabilitation, Clatsop Retirement Village, Clatsop In-Home Care, and Clatsop Care Memory Community. I care deeply about vulnerable people in our community, and I am running for the district's board to ensure that patients receive quality care and to advocate for the staff.

Please visit my Facebook page if you any questions:
@jacdevaney

Paid for by Jacqueline DeVaney for Clatsop Health