

Lessons Learned from CTAF Change Process:

The following is a summary of lessons learned and best practices collected from airports that have recently made a change to their CTAF frequency. These airports include: DeFuniak Springs (54J), Marco Island (MKY), Williston Municipal (X60), and The Florida Keys Marathon International (MTH).

- The FCC process to register/verify the airport's radio license and request a change from the currently assigned CTAF/UNICOM to a new CTAF/UNICOM can take 60 days or more, including a 45-day period for public notice.
- The FAA process involves completing an Airport Data Change (see below) once the FCC process is completed. Contact your associated FAA ADO office to keep them informed of your intentions.
- Well before the change takes effect look into what is required to get your pilot controlled lighting system re-programmed to the new frequency. In one airport's case they had to order a new component for their pilot controlled lighting system and until it came in and was installed they had to leave the airport lights on from sunset to sunrise.
- Well before the change takes effect, find out how to add a recorded message to your AWOS/ASOS broadcast to inform pilots about the CTAF change. Here is an example from DeFuniak Springs:
 - "NOTAM, effective 27 April 2017 0901 Zulu, CTAF UNICOM change, permanent, 122.8 to 123.05."
- Well before the change takes effect, find out how to enter NOTAMS for the airport and draft the NOTAM that you intend to use once the CTAF change is imminent. Here are some example NOTAMS:
 - GNV 04/256 54J COM CTAF 122.8 CHANGED TO 123.05 1704270901-PERM
 - GNV 04/257 54J COM UNICOM 122.8 CHANGED TO 123.05 1704270901-PERM
 - Note: The effective date of the NOTAMs above for 54J were identical to the effective date of the associated Chart Supplement
 - GNV 07/403 X60 COM UNICOM FREQ 122.8 CHANGED TO 122.975 1708011200-PERM
 - Note: The effective date of the NOTAM above for X60 was decided by the airport manager and was not in conjunction with the next Chart Supplement effective date.
- Plan in advance how to inform the regular users of the airport about the CTAF change, both before it happens and afterwards. The list of regular users will include all of the aircraft based at the airport, in addition to those who frequently use the airport for training, stop-overs, instrument approaches, special events (e.g., fly-ins), etc.
- Once the 5010 data was updated with the new frequency (I believe the application process causes this to happen), many of the aviation/pilot websites will also be automatically updated. However, many won't (including AOPA's). So be ready to provide updates whenever you have contact with these organizations, such as when they contact you for updates on your fuel prices.
- If you opt to change your CTAF prior to the date the 5010 is updated, consider notifying some of the popular flight planning web sites (e.g., FltPlan.com, ForeFlight, Garmin, etc.) to inform them of the change. In many cases their data is updated automatically as a result of the 5010 data being updated.
- Check the date the next FAA Chart Supplement update is scheduled. You should be able to view the next edition files about 20 days prior to see if the new CTAF for the airport is going to be published. Here's the website for the Chart Supplements:
https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/dafd/ When the info

under the title “Next Edition Date” becomes a hyperlink, you will be able to open the file. Checking for your CTAF change prior to the effective date can serve as an “early warning” that your CTAF change is about to become official.

- Also check the date the next Terminal Procedures (instrument approach plates) update is scheduled. Like the Chart Supplement changes, the next edition files of the Terminal Procedures are available approximately 20 days prior to their effective date. Here’s the website for the Terminal Procedures:
https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/dtpp/
- Expect the new CTAF on the VFR Sectional to be displayed when the next edition associated chart is issued. Note: The VFR sectional updates are on a different cycle than the Chart Supplements and Terminal Procedures. Therefore, there will be a time period where some FAA pubs/charts are updated with your new CTAF and other FAA pubs/charts are not yet updated. Here’s the website for the VFR Sectionals where you can check 20 days prior to confirm the new frequency has been listed:
https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/vfr/
- All of the airports monitored their old CTAF on a 2nd radio and (as expected) despite all the various places and ways the new CTAF has been advertised/notified, there have been a few pilots that have called in on the old frequency. If the airport staff hears someone calling in on the old CTAF they get on the radio and tell them to switch to the new CTAF. (As a private pilot myself it irritates me to hear that this happens, but fortunately it’s been a relatively rare occurrence.)

I was able to provide support to all of these airports during their CTAF change process, including providing them with research and analysis of which frequency(ies) appeared to be the best option to change their new CTAF to. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further:

Mike McClure, AAE CM, FCCM

Aviation System Manager

Aviation Office | Florida Department of Transportation

605 Suwannee Street | MS #46 | Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Office: 850-414-4506

Mobile: 850-597-4294

Below is some additional information on the NFDC and FCC. These are the places to start the process if you do not already have an FCC license for the new CTAF.

How can I add or make a change to the UNICOM or Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) for an airport?

To add, modify or delete UNICOM or Common Traffic Advisory frequencies, airport owners/managers should access the [National Flight Data Center \(NFDC\) Portal](#) and submit an Airport Data Change Form (public and military airports only) or contact Aeronautical Information Management, at 1-(866) 295-8236 and request your authorized UNICOM or CTAF be published and/or charted. The FAA Specialist will verify your information and publish a change in the National Flight Data Digest (NFDD). Once published in the NFDD, the appropriate publications and charts will reflect the new information by the next effective date.

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