

MEMORANDUM

TO: Craig Hupy, Public Services Area Administrator
Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

FROM: Matthew J. Kulhanek, Fleet & Facilities Manager

DATE: August 21, 2018

SUBJECT: Airport Environmental Assessment Study Background Information

The Environmental Assessment (EA) study for the proposed safety extension of runway 06/24 at the Ann Arbor Airport was started by the City of Ann Arbor in February 2009. The EA process is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that dictates the review of potential impacts for federally funded projects. An EA creates a fact based assessment of the potential impacts a project may have as opposed to emotionally based and unsubstantiated information.

One of the important components of the EA study is an airport user survey. This measures the volume and type of aircraft that use an airport which, if meeting an established FAA standard, provides justification for the project. After considerable public input and two airport user surveys, the first public hearing on the draft EA was held in March 2010. The FAA (Detroit office) provided written comments in May 2010 which included requesting a third airport user survey. This user survey was completed and the response to all comments were provided to the FAA in November 2010. In September 2011, the FAA (Detroit office) finally responded stating that since Michigan is a FAA block grant state that they would not need to sign off on the EA document.

As the City, MDOT and the consultant worked to finish the revisions to the draft EA, we received notice that FAA Technical Operations would need to review the draft EA since there are a set of federally owned navigation aids at the airport. This would also require execution of a FAA Reimbursable Agreement to cover their costs for the review. A grant was processed for the cost of this Agreement and both the grant and Agreement approved by City Council. Revised draft EA #1 was submitted to FAA Tech Ops in March 2013. Initial comments were received from Tech Ops in September 2013. Comments went back and forth until June 2014 when revised draft #2 was submitted to Tech Ops.

In February 2013, Pittsfield Charter Township filed a petition with the United States Secretary of Transportation to deny funding and approval of the project. The petition was forwarded to the FAA and, according to counsel for the FAA Great Lakes Regional office (Chicago), it was dismissed.

The FAA Great Lakes Regional office requested a meeting in December 2014 to discuss the document and potential legal concerns. The parties agreed to have regular teleconferences to discuss format changes requested by the FAA. These telecons went from January 2015 until May 2015 and after substantial format changes (and another user survey) a significantly revised draft EA #3 was submitted to the FAA in January 2016. More Tech Ops comments were received in May 2016 and a revised draft #4 submitted in November 2016.

The second public hearing on the revised draft EA was held in January 2017. FAA Regional provided additional comments in February 2017. These comments included the first request to the City to use the new FAA EA format, complete an air quality assessment, update the noise study (using their new noise model), update the wetlands assessment and complete a wildlife hazard assessment. The parties met again in May 2017 to discuss how best to resolve the FAA comments. After a new series of telecons from July to September 2017, it was decided to bring in a consulting engineer to address these new requirements and complete the study.

The parties decided that the firm of Mead & Hunt was best qualified to address these requirements. A scope of services was prepared in December 2017 and was reviewed and approved by the City and MDOT, with final consent from the FAA in June 2018. Grant funding for the consultant's work was approved by the Michigan Aeronautics Commission in July 2018 and is provided for City Council's consideration on September 4, 2018.

It is important to note that the four airport user survey's completed for the EA each documented that the airport volume and type of aircraft exceeded the required standard for justification of the proposed project. The cost of the work to date and the proposed work is being funded by 95% state and federal grants and 5% local airport matching funds.

It is important to complete the EA so the City and surrounding public can have a documented, fact based assessment of the potential impacts of any runway changes which then allows for an informed decision on whether to consider the project or not. The FAA, MDOT and the City have invested considerable resources into the EA to make sure the final product is an accurate and complete assessment.