

Executive Summary

Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to identify potential environmental impacts that could result from the proposed extension of Runway 6-24, as recommended by the recently completed airport master plan for Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field (ERI). The need for extending Runway 6-24 is based on the following objectives:

- To provide adequate runway length for planned aviation demand
- To correct non-standard safety areas and enhance safety for current aircraft operations

During the development of this project, an extensive public involvement program was undertaken. As a result of the program, opposition was raised against the termination of Powell Avenue that is currently located at the end eastern end (Runway 24 End) of Runway 6-24. To address this opposition, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the project Sponsor (Erie Municipal Airport Authority (EMAA)) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Millcreek Township to relocate Powell Avenue as a north – south roadway (see Appendix B, Runway Extension Project, Memorandum of Understanding with Millcreek Township [March 12, 2004]).

The organization of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Project Background
- Chapter 2 – Description of Alternatives
- Chapter 3 – Potential Environmental Impacts Analysis
- Chapter 4 – Selection of Preferred Alternative
- Figures

Supporting detailed technical documents are included in the Appendices. The Section 4(f) Evaluation (Section 303 (C)) is included in Appendix O.

It is important to note that the relocated Powell Avenue (currently located east of the Runway 24 End) is proposed as mitigation, in response to public opposition to the roads termination and related impacts upon emergency services response times. As such, the proposed Powell Avenue relocation is treated in the EA as an impact secondary to the runway extension project and is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.14 – Secondary (Induced) Impacts. Additionally, the impacts of the proposed Powell Avenue relocation is combined with the impacts of each alternative advanced for detailed analysis and presented in Chapter 4, providing an impact comparison.

Purpose and Need

The extension of Runway 6-24 that is being proposed herein is consistent with the planning efforts completed as part of a comprehensive airport master plan and reflects the aviation needs of the region. Through a commitment letter received from Erie Aviation Inc., sufficient aviation demand exists today to support the need for extending Runway 6-24 to accommodate the DC-9 as the critical aircraft. Additionally, there is strong support from regional businesses and airlines for an extension of Runway 6-24. The need to address non-standard runway safety areas is also an integral part of the proposed action.

While the master plan identified and considered potential environmental impacts as part of the planning process, it focused primarily on technical and economic considerations when developing and analyzing various alternatives. This EA evaluates three alternatives (Alternatives 1 – No Action, and 3 - Extend Runway 24 end 1,900 feet) from the master plan and Alternative 8 - Engineered Material Arresting System with particular emphasis on environmental impacts and natural, cultural, and socioeconomic features in the project area.

Alternatives

The Erie Airport is oriented east to west. It is bordered to the north by mixed residential and commercial land uses. The main roadway to the north is West 12th Street. To the south, the airport is bordered by a high volume, two-track railroad corridor. The major roadway is Route 20 that is located to the south of and parallel to the railroad corridor. To the east of the airport is the Millcreek Township Superfund site, also the site of the Millcreek public golf course. A north/south local roadway (Powell Avenue) is adjacent to the end of Runway 24 and connects Route 20 with West 12th Street. The local roadway crosses over the railroad corridor on an existing bridge structure. To the west of the airport is mixed residential and commercial land use. A local roadway (Asbury Road) is located to the west of Runway 6, crosses beneath the rail road corridor and connects Route 20 with West 12th Street.

Alternatives evaluated included extending the runway to the west (Runway 6 End), to the east (Runway 24 End), a combination of extensions to both the east and west, an airport to new location alternative, and a technological alternative consisting of engineering materials arresting system (EMAS) applications.

The completed master plan identified seven alternatives to address runway deficiencies and design standards. Two alternatives were determined to meet the stated purpose and need, and were considered reasonable and feasible alternatives for further in-depth evaluation as part of this EA. These alternatives include the extension of Runway 24 End by 1,900 feet and the inclusion of a standard runway safety area (RSA), Alternative 3 and the extension of Runway 24 End by 1,520 feet with the inclusion of Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS) on the Runway 6 End, Alternative 8. Alternative 8 was developed as a result of the public involvement process. A separate financial feasibility study was conducted in accordance with FAA Order 5200.9, *Financial Feasibility and Equivalency of Runway Safety Area Improvements and Engineered Material Arresting Systems*. The no-action Alternative 1 was also carried through the EA analysis.

Alternatives considered included:

- Alternative 1:* No-Action
- Alternative 2:* Extend Runway 24 end 900 feet
- Alternative 3:* Extend Runway 24 end 1,900 feet
- Alternative 4:* Extend Runway 24 end 1,100 feet and Runway 6 end 900 feet
- Alternative 5:* Construct a new 7,500-foot runway
- Alternative 6:* Extend Runway 24 end 2,500 feet
- Alternative 7:* Relocate the airport to a new location
- Alternative 8:* Engineered Material Arresting System

Of the eight alternatives, Alternatives 1, 3, and 8 were considered for in-depth evaluation as part of this EA, while the remaining alternatives (2, 4, 5, 6, and 7) were considered unreasonable, infeasible,

or impractical. Alternatives were developed and evaluated according to the airport's runway length requirements, environmental studies, engineering criteria, FAA design criteria, input gathered from the general public, and information from various environmental agencies.

The preferred alternative identified within this EA is Alternative 3. This alternative is consistent with the master plan's recommended alternative for the 20-year planning period (2000 through 2020). Alternative 3 generally consists of extending Runway 24 end 1,900 feet to the east, thereby providing an available runway takeoff length of 7,500 feet. Alternative 3 also addresses the non-standard runway safety areas at both runway ends and meets the purpose and need stated herein.

Environmental Consequences

The environmental impacts of Alternative 3 that are below the threshold of significance include:

- Impacts to the Millcreek Township Flood Detention Basin (FDB)
- Fish, Wildlife, and Plants
- Light Emissions

Environmental impacts of Alternative 3 that are significant but can be mitigated below the threshold of significance include:

- Closure of Powell Avenue with mitigation to relocate
- Noise impacts to five homes and thirteen mobile homes
- Acquisition of homes and businesses
- Stream impacts of 3,150 feet
- Wetland impacts of 7.89 acres (and an additional 4.89 acres of impacts related to obstruction removal)
- Impacts to the Millcreek Township Superfund Site
- Impacts to the Millcreek Township Golf Course (a DOT Section 4(f) property)

There are no environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated below the threshold of significance associated with the preferred alternative.

Mitigation measures, intended to minimize potential environmental impacts, are identified in the EA and would become part of this runway extension project. During the final design phase, permitting details and related environmental specifications, construction costs, and a schedule of mitigation implementation would be developed in coordination with the various environmental resource and regulatory agencies to ensure that all environmental measures are appropriately applied and monitored as part of the construction phase. Proposed mitigation measures identified in this EA include the following:

- Construction of a local roadway to mitigate the closure of Powell Avenue
- Development (if possible) of a public park/green space
- Creation of a stormwater management area to mitigate existing and potential flooding
- Reconfiguration of the Millcreek Township golf course
- Landscape treatments to reduce the aesthetic impact of obstruction removal and the CAT I approach lighting system on the Millcreek Township golf course

- Landscape treatments to reduce the aesthetic impact of obstruction removal on residential properties
- Implementation of appropriate design measures to avoid excavation below the Millcreek Township's Superfund site remedial earthen cover
- Preparation and implementation of an erosion and sedimentation control plan
- Wetland mitigation to replace wetland losses through filling activities and loss of wetland functions and values
- Stream mitigation to replace stream losses through filling and construction activities
- Housing and business relocation assistance
- Emergency service plan and mutual aid agreements (Many new agreements are in place as a result of developing this EA)
- Preparation and implementation of an environmental response plan, in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations
- Preparation and implementation of a health and safety plan
- Environmental monitoring during construction
- Continued public information and agency coordination process during design and construction

Positive effects of implementing the preferred alternative include:

- Compliance with FAA design standards for runway safety areas
- Adequate runway length for the design aircraft
- Potential for reduced visibility minimums for approaching aircraft
- Removal of obstructions to FAR Part 77 and TERPS surfaces
- Effective stormwater management
- Aesthetic enhancements to, and reconfiguration of, the Millcreek Township Golf Course
- Mutual aid agreements for emergency services
- Relocated Powell Avenue
- Support of initiatives to enhance the regional economy

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Erie Municipal Airport Authority (EMAA) and Millcreek Township was executed to ensure that all mitigation measures outlined in this EA are incorporated into the permitting, design, and construction phases of the proposed project. The MOU is a strong testimony that this EA reflects a continually evolving process. Its importance would not only be useful for environmental clearance, but would continue on through design and into construction.

This EA would serve as the central guidance for:

- Monitoring and managing potential environmental impacts from permitting, through the design phase, property acquisition, construction, creation, and monitoring of wetlands.
- Refining project development upon discovery of secondary impacts, or changes in project design through the use of an Environmental Management System (EMS) and NEPA Adaptive Management model. Under this approach, actions are adjusted to foster desired outcomes and reduce undesired ones.
- Avoiding excavation below the remedial earthen cover of the Millcreek Township Superfund site

Public Involvement

An extensive public involvement program (PIP) was developed and implemented as part of the project. The PIP involved continual briefings of public officials, public meetings, focus group meetings, and formulation of a Community Advisory Committee. Additionally, representatives of the project team met periodically with Millcreek Township supervisors, Millcreek Paramedic Services, Millcreek fire and police, city of Erie fire and police, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency regional representative to develop a unified approach to emergency and medical service (EMS) issues related to the proposed project. A summary of public involvement throughout the course of this EA is presented within Appendix A, Public Involvement Summary.

In order to complete the environmental clearance process, the Draft EA was made available to the public, as well as various federal, state, and local agencies and Native American Tribal organizations for review and comment. A public hearing was held on September 1, 2005 to obtain public input to the proposed action. The comments were received, analyzed, and the substantive comments addressed in Appendix Q of this document.

Following completion of the EA process, the FAA will make a decision regarding the degree of environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. If the FAA decides that no significant impacts are associated with the proposed project, including applicable mitigation measures, a Finding of No Significant Impact would be prepared. However, if the FAA decides that significant impacts exist after mitigation has been considered or there is substantial public controversy regarding the proposed project, an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed project would be developed.

Copies of the EA were available for review at the following locations:

- Erie International Airport, 4411 West 12th Street Erie, PA
- Millcreek Township office building 3680 West 26th Street Erie, PA

Comments on the EA were made in writing and submitted to:

- Mr. Thomas Barba
C&S Engineers, Inc.
499 Col. Eileen Collins Blvd.
Syracuse, NY 13212-3903

FAA Guidance

This EA was prepared in accordance with EA preparation guidelines listed within 40 CFR Part 1500, *Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations*, and FAA Order 5050.4A, *Airport Environmental Handbook* and FAA Order 1050.1E *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*. Pursuant to FAA Order 5050.4A and FAA Order 1050.1E, this EA includes preliminary impact scoping, purpose and need, alternatives analysis, descriptions of affected environments, environmental consequences, and mitigating measures that have been developed to minimize potential impacts resulting from the proposed project.