

FAA News



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Update on T.F Green Airport Improvement Program Draft Environmental Impact Statement June 3, 2009 Public Meeting

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is preparing the T.F. Green Airport Improvement Program Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to provide an independent evaluation of the environmental impacts associated with a program of airport improvement projects proposed by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC). The purpose of the T.F. Green Airport Improvement Program is to:

- *Enhance airport safety*
- *Enhance the efficiency* of the Airport and the New England Regional Airport System, to more fully meet the current and anticipated demand for aviation service

The Improvement Program includes safety projects: improving Runway 16-34 Runway Safety Areas (RSAs), demolishing Hangar 1 and relocating Taxiway C, and efficiency projects: extending Runway 5-23, adding terminal gates, upgrading the airport roadway system, replacing ground service equipment and belly cargo facilities, constructing additional integrated cargo facilities and building a structured commercial parking garage.

Public Meeting

On June 3, 2009, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is holding a Public Information Meeting on the T.F. Green Airport Improvement Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, at the Crossings, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, RI from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

At this meeting, the FAA will have display boards providing an update on the EIS and depicting the findings of the environmental impact analysis of the Airport Improvement Program Alternative B4. FAA has tentatively identified Alternative B4 as the Preferred Alternative; additional input from reviewing agencies and the public will inform this determination. Environmental and community categories to be displayed include: land acquisition, noise, social and economic factors, air quality, wetlands, water quality, roadways, historic, and archaeological resources, among others. The materials will also show the proposed construction phases of the airport projects and will describe the next steps in the EIS process.

The display boards will be available for viewing from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. The public is invited to drop-in during that time. The meeting will consist of informational board stations staffed with project staff where

the public will have an opportunity to provide input and ask questions. A brief slideshow will be screened every half hour from 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM.

Status of the Draft EIS

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as the lead agency responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and assuring its adequacy, is responsible for identifying the Preferred Alternative. The FAA is tasked with selecting the alternative that it believes would fulfill the agency's mission and responsibilities and would meet the proposed T.F. Green Airport Improvement Program's purpose and need, giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical, and other factors.¹ The FAA has tentatively identified Alternative B4 as the Preferred Alternative.

Alternatives Development

A key task of the Environmental Impact Statement is to undertake a comprehensive Airport Improvement Program alternatives analysis to identify Program options that would meet RIAC's Purpose and Need for the Project, while minimizing community and environmental affects. After an extensive screening process, two alternatives were identified, namely Alternative B1 and Alternative B2, each of which contained all the proposed projects in different layouts and configurations. Alternative B1 included an extension to Runway 5-23 to a total of 9,350 feet and would require a relocation of Airport Road from Warwick Avenue with a connection to Post Road and the Route 37 connector. Alternative B2 would include an extension to Runway 5-23 to 8,700 feet in a northerly direction, and a relocation of Airport Road in the same configuration as Alternative B2.

Alternatives B1 and B2 were analyzed to assess impacts to natural resources, community disruption, residential land acquisition, and the impacts to businesses. Alternatives B1 and B2 would have high community and wetlands impacts. Alternative B1 would require a higher number of land acquisitions for construction compared to Alternative B2; however, both alternatives would require a significant number of residential and commercial land acquisitions for construction. In addition, Alternatives B1 and B2 would impact the Airport Plaza parcel on the corner of Post Road and Airport Road, which contains a number of community-supporting businesses and jobs. For both Alternatives B1 and B2 there would be a substantial number of jobs lost and property tax losses to the City of Warwick. In terms of wetland impacts, Alternative B1 would have the most wetland impacts at 20.2 acres and many impacts to the Buckeye Brook wetland system. For Alternative B2, the total wetland impacts are substantially lower at 8.6 acres.

Proposed Alternative B4

The outcome of the environmental consequences analysis showed that there would be significant community disruption because of the high number of residences and businesses that would be displaced. After a review of impacts to natural resources and community disruption for Alternatives B1 and B2, RIAC initiated a study to determine if another option could be developed that would limit community disruption and environmental impacts. This study led to the development of Alternative B4 which was further refined by the FAA. Alternative B4 was developed to:

- Minimize impacts to the residential communities and businesses north of the Airport,
- Reduce mandatory land acquisition for construction, and
- Avoid impacts to natural resources north of the Airport.

Alternative B4 would extend Runway 5-23 south approximately 1,500 feet for a total of 8,700 feet and shifts Runway 16-34 north approximately 100 feet. This would accommodate the improved RSAs and minimize

¹ *Federal Aviation Administration Order 5050.4B, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, Federal Aviation Administration, United States Department of Transportation, April 28, 2006.

impacts to businesses on the Runway 16 End and would also limit impacts to natural resources on the Runway 34 End. The Runway 16-34 safety improvements would require a partial relocation of Airport Road at the intersection of Post Road and Airport Road. Airport Road would be partially relocated to the north. Alternative B4 would not require a full relocation of Airport Road, but Main Avenue would be shifted to the south at the Runway 5 End.

Key elements of Alternative B4, that is, the safety projects and the extension of Runway 5-23, and related preparatory work, would be phased so that work can be completed by 2015. Some of the benefits associated with an accelerated schedule would be the earlier realization of important safety and operational benefits, earlier resolution of homeowner uncertainty regarding the necessary associated property acquisitions, and shortening the overall timeframe for community disruption and temporary construction impacts. Alternative B4 would have benefits to the community, as well as impacts that would be mitigated.

Alternative B4: Summary of Benefits and Impacts

Benefits	2020
Total New Jobs in Warwick	797
Total Impacts to Personal Income in Warwick	\$24,908,000
Total Increase in Business Revenue in Warwick	\$63,328,000
Total New Jobs in Rhode Island	1,813
Total Increase in Personal Income in Rhode Island	\$53,104,000
Total Increase in Business Revenue in Rhode Island	\$135,998,000
Total Gains in State Sales Taxes from Airport Activities	\$1,684,000
Total Gains in State Income Taxes from Airport Activities	\$476,000
Impacts	
Gross Direct Annual Tax Impacts (Losses) to City of Warwick	(\$1,000,000)
Residential Units Acquired for Construction (Mandatory Acquisitions) ¹	11
Business Displaced for Construction (Mandatory Acquisition) ¹	10
Residential Units Acquired for Noise Mitigation (Voluntary Participation) ¹	134
Residential Units Eligible for Acquisition for RPZ (Voluntary Participation) ¹	67
Housing units newly exposed to noise levels > 65 dB ²	130
Wetland Impacts (acres) ³	7.3
Waterways (linear feet) ³	918
Historic Architectural Properties/Cemetery ⁴	Hangar 1 (demolish) Historic cemetery

1 Impacts would be mitigated according to the Uniform relocation Act requirements

2 Eligible for sound insulation

3 Impacts would be mitigated according to US Army Corps of Engineers and RI Department of Environmental Management requirements

4 Impacts would be mitigated according to Section 106 requirements

When compared to the other alternatives being evaluated, Alternative B4 has the least impact to natural resources and is the least disruptive to residential properties and businesses. Alternative B4 meets the purpose and need for the Airport Improvement Program, providing the same aviation and community benefits as Alternative B2 and similar benefits to Alternative B1. From a community disruption and environmental impact perspective, Alternative B4 has the lowest overall impacts. All significant impacts that would occur under Alternative B4 could be mitigated. The FAA therefore tentatively identifies Alternative B4 as the Preferred Alternative. Additional input from reviewing agencies and the public will confirm or alter this determination. Coordination on the impacts of the proposed Airport Improvement Program and on mitigation will continue throughout the development of the Draft and Final EIS. No final FAA decision on the Preferred Alternative and associated mitigation has been or will be made until the issuance of the agency's Record of Decision (ROD), which occurs after the release of the Final EIS.

Opportunities for Public Input

The public will have several opportunities to provide input and comment on the T.F. Green Airport Improvement Program Draft EIS. Members of the public will be able to ask questions and provide feedback at the June 3, 2009 Information Meeting. After the Draft EIS is filed, a formal public hearing will be scheduled, during the comment period on the Draft EIS. At the hearing, the public may provide comments that will be transcribed and will become part of the administrative record on the EIS. Written comments on the Draft EIS may also be submitted before the end of the public comment period.