

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Location

Blue Ridge Regional Airport
Martinsville, VA

Introduction

This Finding of No Significant Impact sets out the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) consideration of the environmental and other factors for Airport Layout Plan (ALP) approval and federal financial assistance for a runway extension (from 5002 feet to 6000 feet) and other airport infrastructure. This FONSI is based on the *Final Environmental Assessment for Runway Extension and Associated Infrastructure (Final 2020 EA)* prepared for Blue Ridge Airport Authority (BRAA) the dated October, 2020, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

BRAA is located within Henry County, Virginia approximately eight miles southwest of the City of Martinsville. The airport is owned and operated by the BRAA. The airport property consists of approximately 363 acres of land. The Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV) designates Blue Ridge Regional Airport as a regional airport, and the corresponding FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport System designation is non-primary regional airport. The typical aviation activity at Blue Ridge Regional Airport is attributed to single and multi-engine piston, turbo prop, and business jet general aviation aircraft with overall wing spans less than 80 feet and gross weights less than 70,000 lbs. The current conditionally-approved ALP requests a runway extension from a 5,002-ft category C-II to a 6,000-ft category D-II runway.

Project Description

The following is a list of project components as discussed within section 2.0 of the 2020 EA, incorporated by reference herein.

- Shift runway 13-31 75 feet to the west and extend runway 131,073 ft to the west using category D-II design standards, for a total runway length of 6,000 ft
- Provide category D-II standard Runway Safety Areas (RSA) (500 ft wide by 1,000 ft long) and Runway Object Free Areas (ROFA) (800 ft wide by 1,000 ft long) with associated earthwork grading on each runway end.
- Realign roads as necessary to provide clear ROFA for 6,000-ft runway, abandon existing VDOT right-of-way (ROW), and dedicate new right-of-way
- Extend parallel taxiway to 6,000 feet and design to Taxiway Design Group 2 (TDG-2) standards
- New and relocated NAVAIDS:
 - *Runway End Identifier Lights (REILs)*
 - *Omnidirectional Approach Lighting System (ODALS)*
 - *Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI)*
 - *Localizer (LOC) / Distance Measuring Equipment (DME)*
 - *Windsock*
- New lighting, signage, and marking
 - *Medium Intensity Runway Lights (MIRLs)*
 - *Directional signage*
 - *Taxiway edge lighting*

- *Runway and taxiway marking*
- Modification to stormwater management facilities to address additional impervious surfaces
- New and relocated security fence
- Land and easement acquisitions
- Part 77 obstruction removal
- Revise LOC RWY 31, RNAV (GPS) RWY 31, and RNAV (GPS) RWY 13 procedures to account for the shift and extension

Purpose and Need

There are two purposes and needs (one Federal and the other local) for the Blue Ridge Regional Airport to extend its runway:

The Federal Purpose and Need: The extension would enable the airport to effectively serve its critical design aircraft, the Gulfstream 450. At the current runway length of 5002 ft this aircraft is limited to a payload that is 63% of capacity. A 6,000 ft runway would enable the critical design aircraft to operate at 90% of payload capacity.

The Local Purpose and Need: The runway extension would increase the Airport’s positive economic impacts to the region.

Alternatives

Three alternatives were initially developed that would address the Purpose and Need for the proposed project. To accommodate the operating requirements of the critical aircraft, the only feasible alternatives would extend the runway either to the West or the East. The following three Alternatives were evaluated in Chapter 4.0 in the **Final 2020 EA**:

The No Action Alternative represents Blue Ridge Regional Airport in its current state without any proposed improvements. The Airport would remain in its current configuration and none of the proposed improvements would be implemented.

Alternative A: Extend Runway to the West

This alternative provides a 6,000-ft D-II runway consistent with the 2018 ALP. This alternative specifically extends the Runway 13 end 1,073 feet west and shifts the Runway 31 end 75 feet west to remove Spencer-Preston Road from the standard ROFA. Route 698 (Airport Road) would be realigned outside the new ROFA. See Section 4.5 of the 2020 EA for Additional Considerations for Route 698 analysis. All runway, RSA, ROFA, navigational aids (NAVAIDs), such as Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI) and Localizer, and road realignments with this alternative would occur on existing airport property.

Alternative B: Extend Runway to the East

This alternative provides a 6,000-ft D-II runway; however, it considers extending the runway to the east. The associated RSA, ROFA, and Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) of this extension would cross the existing alignment of Spencer-Preston Road (a collector road by VDOT classification), requiring its realignment to clear these surfaces. This alternative would require a minimum of 55 acres of property acquisition.

Alternative B was not carried forward for further evaluation due to potential impacts to the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) Listed Char- Ann Manor House (#044-5294)¹, and VDOT concerns over road impacts to Spenser-Preston Road.

¹ The Char-Ann Manor House is a historical resource under the Department of Transportation Act, 4(F). The Act requires that feasible and prudent alternatives that avoid the Section 4(f) properties should be adopted.

The remaining two Alternatives that were evaluated in the **Final 2020 EA** are Alternative A (referred to as the Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative.

Discussion

The attached **Final 2020 EA** addresses the potential impacts the proposed action might have on the human and natural environment. The following resources were evaluated for potential impacts: Air Quality, Biological (Flora and Fauna); Climate, Coastal Resources; DOT Section 4 (f); Farmlands; Hazardous and Solid Waste; Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources; Land use, Natural Resources; Noise; Sociological, Environmental Justice; and Children's Health and Safety; Visual; Water; and Past, Ongoing, and Future Activities. The results of these environmental studies and analysis are summarized below. Resource areas that are absent or irrelevant to the proposed project are also included below.

Air Quality

Short term, or temporary, air quality impacts at the Blue Ridge Regional Airport for the Preferred Alternative would be generated from the physical construction of the runway extension and road realignment. But as the Preferred Alternative would be developed in phases over the next five years, those impacts would be similarly spread out over time. Therefore, the short-term emissions impacts for the construction of the Preferred Alternative are below the *de minimis* threshold and are not considered significant. Full analysis of the projected emissions can be found in **Appendix F of the Final 2020 EA**.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to significantly impact air quality.

Biological Resources

Vegetation:

The Preferred Alternative would require the grading of 56.4 acres of land and the removal of eight acres of trees. This land would be graded for runway, taxiway, RSA, ROFA, and cleared for airspace obstruction removal. In the Preferred Alternative, the 56.4 acres of land would ultimately be mowed grassland and was previously a combination of grassland and scrub-shrub. The eight acres of tree removal would be converted from a mixture of hardwood and pines to grassland that is mowed three to four times each year. The loss of 56.4 acres and the removal of eight acres of trees, would be unlikely to impact the common species located in this region, as Blue Ridge Regional Airport is located in a rural area with several thousand acres of scrub-shrub and forested communities surrounding it.

Wildlife:

Potential impacts to wildlife were evaluated in Chapter 6.0 of the **Final 2020 EA**. The following were the results of that analysis:

1. The nearest Bald eagle nest is located at Smith Mountain Lake, 36 miles from the Blue Ridge Regional Airport. Therefore there were no impacts expected to Bald Eagles.
2. Similarly, the eight acres of tree removal associated with the Preferred Alternative is unlikely to have a significant impact on the migratory bird populations as the Airport is located in a largely forested region of Henry County.
3. The only Federally listed threatened or endangered (T&E) species identified by the Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) websites is the federally and state-threatened northern long eared bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*).

The closest hibernacula and winter roost area to the Blue Ridge Regional Airport is 48 miles to the northwest on Brush Mountain in Montgomery County, Virginia. Potential summer roosting habitats are located in forested communities including areas of mature pine forest. Trees greater than three inches in diameter at breast height with suitably sized cavities, sloughing bark, and snags may provide potential suitable habitat. Though there is potential for suitable trees within the eight acres of clearing, it is unlikely to impact the habitat for active season (summer) roosting of the NLEB due to the presence of the larger surrounding forest and the distance from the closest known and mapped hibernacula area.

4. The three additional state-listed species identified by the VDGIF, the Roanoke logperch (*Percina rex*), the green floater (*Lasmigona subviridis*) and orangefin madtom (*Noturus gilberti*), were all aquatic, and as there are no waterbodies impacted by the proposed project, there are no impacts associated with the proposed Preferred Alternative.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative is unlikely to significantly impact biological resources.

Climate

Analysis using the Aviation Environmental Design Tool 3b indicated the difference between the Preferred Alternative and the No-Action Alternative would result in an increase in emissions during operation as follows (and shown in Figure 28 of the 2020 EA): 588 Mega Tons (MT) of CO₂, 595 MT of CO_{2e}, 0.0006 MT of CH₄, and 0.0188 MT N₂O.

While there are no thresholds established by either the FAA or the White House Council on Environmental Quality for Climate Change impacts, the minor increased levels of greenhouse gases would be unlikely to significantly impact the global climate.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not significantly impact Climate Change.

Coastal Resources

Blue Ridge Regional Airport is not located in the Virginia Coastal Zone.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would have no impact on Coastal Resources.

Department of Transportation 4 (f) Resources

As discussed in Section 5.5 of the **Final 2020 EA**, there are no publicly-owned wildlife or recreational areas, no lands purchased with Land and Water Conservation Funds, nor historic sites of national, state, or local significance within or adjacent to the study area.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would have no impact on Section 4 (f) resources.

Farmlands

The United States Department of Agriculture evaluated the potential conversion of farmland (associated with the proposed 56.4 acres of grading required for the runway extension and the eight acres of trees needed to be removed for airspace protection) and determined the Preferred Alternative would score an impact rating of 106 which is below the threshold range of 200-260, identified in FAA Order 5050.4B.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not have a significant impact on Farmlands.

Hazardous Materials and Solid Wastes

No hazardous material are anticipated to be generated due to the construction of the Preferred Alternative.

Construction of the road realignment and runway extension would primarily generate fill material that would be utilized on site. Other debris would be disposed of off-site at the First Piedmont Corporation private landfill. It will be the responsibility of the contractor to ensure construction materials are properly managed, recycled, and disposed of. Depending upon the structure composition of the pavement, much of the waste generated by the removal of existing airfield pavement will be recycled into new pavement or base of the paved area.

Vegetative debris generated as part of the Preferred Alternative will be properly disposed of. Larger trees which have marketable values will be delimbed and sold. Smaller trees and vegetative debris will be mulched on-site and recycled.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not have a significant impact on the generation or disposal of Hazardous Materials or Solid Wastes.

Historical, Archaeological, Architectural, and Cultural Resources

No structures within the project area were found eligible for listing on the NRHP. There is one resource listed on the NRHP, the Char-Ann Manor House (#044-5294), located approximately 1/4 mile south of the Airport. The project area does not extend to this resource, and construction of the preferred alternative would occur on the opposite runway end from the Char Ann Manor house. Potential impacts to this resource was a major consideration in adopting the Preferred Alternative.

Based on archival research and a Phase I Archaeological Survey conducted in 2008, no archaeological sites were identified in the project study area for the Preferred Alternative. Additionally, although letters were sent to four tribes, United Keetoowah Band of the Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, Delaware Tribe of Indians, and Eastern Shawnee Tribe; on November 15, 2019, no response had been received as of the writing of the **Final 2020 EA**.

In Summary, the Preferred Alternative will have no impact on Historical, Archaeological, or Cultural Resources.

Land Use

Future land use in the vicinity of the MTV is not expected to change from current uses. Zoning around the airport will remain A-1 and I-1 zoning districts which are compatible with the Airport. Additionally, as discussed more fully in **Section 6.11, Noise in the Final 2020 EA**, no significant noise impacts are expected from the Preferred Alternative.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not have a significant impact on surrounding Land Uses.

Natural Resources and Energy Supply

It is anticipated that the Preferred Alternative would require approximately 5,700 tons of bituminous surface course (asphalt), 1,200 tons of cement (soil cement and cement-treated base course), 20,222 square yards of aggregate for sub-base materials, and fuels associated with the construction equipment. All materials are readily available, and the Preferred Alternative would not diminish supply.

Additionally, regarding energy consumption, the Preferred Alternative is anticipated to increase the runway's energy use from 37,500 kilowatts per month to 45,000 kilowatts per month, primarily due to runway and taxiway lights. This increase in power usage will not exceed available or future energy supply.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not have a significant impact on Natural Resources or Energy Supply.

Noise and Noise- Compatible Land Use

The DNL 65 dB contour is contained within the existing Airport property line for both the Preferred Alternative and the No Action Alternative (See **Figure 30 of the Final 2020 EA**). As no properties outside the Airport property will be newly included within the DNL 65 dB, the Preferred Alternative is below the significance threshold for this impact category.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would not have a significant impact on noise sensitive land uses.

Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice and Children's Environmental Health and Safety

The minority and poverty demographics within Census Tracts 107 (directly adjacent to Airport) and 109 (containing Airport) are similar to the rest of Henry County. About 17% of the population within the referenced census tracts are below the poverty level as compared to 19% in the County. The total minority population in the census tracts is 26% as compared to 28% in the County. The percentage of population is approximately the same for both poverty and minority populations when compared to the County. The Preferred Alternative does not cause a disproportionately high and adverse impact to minority or low-income populations.

The Preferred Alternative does not require the relocation of housing or community businesses, disrupt local traffic patterns, or cause a loss to the community tax base. The projected increase in airport use would directly and indirectly favorably impact the local community.

Additionally, there are no schools, day care facilities, children's health clinics, and recreational facilities near the Airport. The closest school is G.W. Carver Elementary School, 4.5 miles to the northeast. The census tracts around the Airport show 6.9% of the population under the age of 19, while Henry County as a whole lists 22.6%. As such, no adverse impact from the Preferred Alternative is anticipated on children's health or safety.

In Summary, the Preferred Alternative would not significantly impact Socioeconomic or Environmental Justice communities or Children's Health and Safety.

Visual Effects

The Preferred Alternative will increase the number of runway and taxiway edge lights, however, these additional lights will occur on the western portion of airport property, adjacent to the forested land and more than 1-mile from the existing residential uses along Spencer- Preston road.

The runway extension is proposed to occur on an active airport. There will be minimal difference if the visual appearance of the airport. The obstruction removal that will take place off-airport will potentially be noticeable, but as there is ample additional forested areas adjacent to the proposed tree removal, it is unlikely to present a significant visual impact.

In Summary, the Preferred Alternative would not significantly impact Visual Effects.

Water Resources

Wetlands

A wetland field delineation of the study area was conducted on October 8, 2019. During the field survey, 0.6 acres of wetlands and 1,451 linear feet of stream channel were delineated. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) confirmed the wetland boundaries on January 28, 2020. See **Appendix M of the Final 2020 EA** for the full wetland delineation report, including the preliminary Jurisdictional Determination (JD) letter. The wetland types include palustrine forested wetlands, palustrine scrub-shrub, and palustrine emergent wetlands. The Preferred Alternative includes the acquisition of property that contains wetland areas. However, the Preferred Alternative does not include tree clearing, grading, or paving within 100 feet of these wetland areas. Both the Preferred Alternative and the No Action Alternative will include the acquisition of 45 acres of land to the west to protect airspace to Runway 13. However, neither alternative will impact the 0.6 acre of wetland or the 1,451 feet of stream channel delineated.

Floodplains

There are no 100-year flood zones on Airport property or within the project area (see **Section 5.15.2 and Appendix M in the Final 2020 EA**).

Groundwater

The Airport and surrounding residential properties utilize private wells for their water supply. The Preferred Alternative is not a source of toxic or dangerous substances and is also located 2900 feet from the closest well (located on Airport property), which is greater than the 50 feet distance from a public drinking water source required under Virginia water quality regulations found in 12 VAC5-630-380. Preliminary engineering of the Preferred Alternative indicates the deepest cut in construction would be approximately 12 feet below ground level, with most areas being less than seven feet deep. Based on previous projects at the Airport, the groundwater is assumed to be more than 25 feet below ground level. As such, the Preferred Alternative construction would not impact groundwater. Additionally, stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) would further protect the airport well from potential contamination.

Surface Water

There are two creeks adjacent to the project study area (see **Figure 25 in the Final 2020 EA**). Kroger Creek is located to the west of the project area, and Horsepasture Creek to the east. Storm

water from the project study area flows to Kroger and Horsepasture Creeks overland or through ditches and channels, then from the creeks to the North Mayo River, and then to the Dan River, which eventually feeds the Kerr Reservoir. Kerr Reservoir is a source of public drinking water and is approximately 100 miles downstream from the Airport. There are no other surface water intakes within a five-mile radius of the project study area.

The Preferred Alternative would increase impervious surface area at the Airport by 5.2 acres, potentially also increasing the flow of stormwater off the new surfaces.

The Airport operates under a Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (VPDES) General Permit (VAR050195) for stormwater discharge associated with industrial activity, maintains a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan as well as a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. Each of these plans identify BMPs and measures to prevent contamination of water bodies.

Under the VSMP permit discussed above (**See section 5.15.4 of the Final 2020 EA**), a SWPPP for construction activities of the Preferred Alternative would be developed and maintained by the selected contractor. The Airport would be responsible for ensuring that a project-specific erosion and sediment control plan is submitted to the County for review and approval prior to the start of ground disturbing activities. In addition, the selected construction contractor would be responsible for adhering to the VPDES permit requirements and implementation of BMPs during construction.

In Summary, the Preferred Alternative would not significantly impact Water Quality on or around the airport.

Past, On-going, and Future Activities

Activities in the past few years were associated with maintaining the current Runway and Taxiway. There is currently an Airport Road Relocation and Terminal Apron Expansion project being constructed. Future activities at the airport include a planned Hangar construction and more taxiway rehabilitation.

In Summary, the Preferred Alternative would not significantly contribute to cumulative impacts to any identified resource category on or near the airport.

Coordination with General Public and Agencies

In accordance with FAA guidance for completing the EA process, the Draft EA was made available for public review and comment from August 1st 2020 thru September 14th 2020 and advertised in the Martinsville Bulletin on July 31st 2020 (**See Appendix N of the Final 2020 EA** for a copy of the notice). No comments were received during this review period. In addition, the Virginia DEQ conducted a public hearing on September 2nd 2020. This hearing was advertised in the Martinsville Bulletin on August 17th 2020 (**See Appendix N of the Final 2020 EA**). The purpose of the public hearing was to present the findings of this EA to the public and receive public comment. No comments were made at the public hearing and a copy of the record is included in **Appendix N of the Final 2020 EA**.

Mitigation Requirements

Due to the lack of significant impacts in all resource areas, there is no requirement for mitigation.

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have carefully and thoroughly considered the facts contained in the attached EA. Based on that information I find that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in section 101(a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). I also find the proposed Federal Action, with the required mitigation referenced above, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to section 102 (2)(C) of NEPA. As a result, FAA will not prepare an EIS for this action.

Recommended:

12/17/2020

X Genevieve Walker

Genevieve Walker

Signed by: Department of Transportation

Genevieve Walker, Environmental Protection Specialist
Washington Airports District Office

Date

Approval:

Matthew J. Thys, Manager
Washington Airports District Office

Date