

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)  
Passenger Terminal Building Expansion & Air Traffic Control Tower Relocation  
Focused Environmental Assessment  
Asheville Regional Airport  
Asheville, NC**

**I. Introduction/Background**

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) announces final agency determinations and approvals for those Federal Actions by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that are necessary to support the proposed developments at the Asheville Regional Airport in Asheville, North Carolina.

**II. Proposed Federal Action**

The airport sponsor has requested FAA funding assistance and Airport Layout Plan (ALP) approval for the following proposed actions:

- Terminal Expansion Development
- Air Traffic Control Tower (ACTC) site relocation
  - The Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority (GARAA) has designated ATCT Site 6 as its preferred alternative

**III. Purpose and Need**

Based on the 2018 Terminal Building Assessment Study (TBAS), the existing passenger terminal facility is well undersized to meet the existing demand. The existing passenger terminal building covers 113,035 SF on two levels. Based on the 2018 TBAS and current passenger demand, the existing facility should be expanded and modernized to cover an area of approximately 222,000 Square Feet. The ultimate size requirements of the two-level terminal building to meet passenger demand in 2038 is a facility having 275,000 Square Feet with 12 passenger gates. Thus, the existing building needs to be nearly twice as large as currently provided to effectively handle the demand in the near term, and 2 ½ times larger in the long-term planning period to accommodate the anticipated airline passenger activity, tenants, and airport staff. The specific deficits were identified in the 2018 TBAS based on enplanements, FAA-approved forecasts, and the associated estimates of peak hour passengers, flights, and load factors. A connected action to the Passenger Terminal Building Expansion is the proposed relocation of the existing Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT). The current ATCT is centrally located in the existing terminal.

**IV. Alternatives**

Federal guidelines concerning the environmental review process require that all reasonable and practicable alternatives that might accomplish the objectives of a proposed project be identified and evaluated. Such an examination ensures that alternatives are not prematurely dismissed and may lead to consideration of alternatives that fulfill the project's purpose and need, as well as enhance environmental quality or

have a less detrimental effect. The alternatives evaluated for this Focused Environmental Assessment (Focused EA) are listed below.

1. Preferred Alternative – (Described above in Proposed Federal Action)
2. No action

## **V. Environmental Impacts**

The EA analyzed all environmental categories based on FAA Order 1050.1F policy and procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1050.1F Desk Reference guidance, and FAA Order 5050.4B, “*Environmental Policy Act Implementing Instructions for Airport Projects*” (NEPA). Those Resource Categories that the Sponsor’s preferred alternative has the potential to impact are discussed below. Mitigation measures for the environmental impacts are discussed in Section VI.

### **V A. Air Quality and Climate**

The proposed action will cause a slight increase in air emissions, including Greenhouse Gases (GHGs), during construction. The GARAA anticipates that the construction of the Proposed Action would occur over a three-year period. A construction emissions inventory was prepared for the EA to show the emissions that would result from the Proposed Action. The results of the emissions inventory indicate that construction of the Terminal Expansion and Tower relocation Proposed Action would not significantly affect air quality or the climate of the area. Buncombe and Henderson counties are in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Due to changes in the aircraft fleet mix, improved vehicle technology, and increased use of ground power units (GPU) and preconditioned air (PCA), emissions of some contaminants are estimated to decrease. For the purposes of the air quality analysis, peak operational and construction emissions were conservatively assumed to occur in the same year.

### **V B. Biological Resources**

The Proposed Action will involve ground-disturbing activities at Asheville Airport. However, adverse impacts to biological resources are not expected. The project would take place on airport property, with most of the impact area on previously disturbed ground. There is no known critical habitat in the project study area. Refer to the Focused EA Appendix D for an aerial of the project areas. No state- or federally-listed species are anticipated to be impacted by the Terminal Expansion and Tower Relocation Proposed Action.

### **V C. Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention**

Based on review of the EPA superfund site search, there are no superfund sites at the airport. There are also no EPA identified hazardous waste cleanup sites identified at the airport. The FAA ATO is completing an Environmental Due Diligence Audit (EDDA) Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for the ATCT Sites. The results will be provided once received (See the Focused EA Appendix I).

GARAA has indicated that if there was any asbestos in the existing terminal and ATCT, that it has already been abated. However, if further hazardous materials

are identified during the demolition phase, GARAA will remove and dispose of those materials in a manner that is consistent with applicable local, state, and federal regulations and requirements.

#### **V D. Natural Resources and Energy Supply**

The construction and maintenance of the Proposed Action will result in the consumption of natural resources due to construction materials and fuel usage. The project study area is urbanized and has adequate access to energy and natural resources. Local utilities will provide the resources and energy for lighting, cooling, heat and hot water to serve the buildings. Existing utility infrastructure that currently serves the airport terminal will be extended for the expansion. A Central Energy Plant (CEP) is proposed for the terminal expansion. Utilities for the CEP would also extend from the utilities that currently serve the airport. No adverse effects are anticipated from the use of natural resources and energy.

#### **V E Noise and Compatible Land Use**

The project study area is entirely on Airport property and is compatible with Airport operations. Also, the Proposed Action terminal expansion project will not increase aircraft activity or otherwise cause off-airport noise impacts, since the terminal is being expanded due to the pre COVID-19 numbers exceeding capacity.

#### **V F. Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources**

Although it is not anticipated that there will be any impacts to historical, architectural, archeological or cultural resources, all of the tribal nations listed will be notified, if Native American artifacts and/or human remains are uncovered or discovered/located during the ground disturbance phase of this project. Each respective tribe will be given the opportunity to determine which tribe can verify that the artifacts historic or cultural resource belongs to their nation.

- Eastern Band of Cherokee Nations
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation
- Catawba

#### **V G. Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, and Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risks**

The Proposed Action will result in short-term, construction-related employment of local contractors, which would be a positive effect on society. Construction-related impacts would be temporary and not of such a magnitude as to cause a significant secondary (induced) impact to the surrounding area in terms of population growth or population growth patterns. In addition, there is not a disproportionate number of minorities or people living below the poverty level within the project study area. Temporary impacts (e.g., air quality, noise as a result of construction) associated with the Terminal expansion and Tower relocation Proposed Action would not impact minority and/or low-income populations. Also, no children live in the project study area. There are no other schools, daycare facilities, or other similar facilities in or adjacent to the project study area. The Proposed Action would not adversely impact children's environmental health and safety.

## **V H. Visual Effects**

The Proposed Action would include lighting to enhance the safe ground movement of aircraft, vehicles, and people. The lighting would be directional and focused within the Airport, and it would be similar to lighting that is currently in place within the project study area. The Proposed Project will expand and modernize the Terminal Building, and will relocate the tower as well as introduce new structures into the project area, however any new development would be consistent with the surrounding airport environment and would not change the visual characteristics of the Airport.

## **V I. Water Resources**

Based on this review resources by the Sponsor, the project areas are not within a floodplain and do not contain a river listed on the National River Inventory or the National Wild and Scenic River list. According to the Sponsor the project is not located over a sole source aquifer. However a NWI stream traverses the proposed utility corridor to the south of ATCT Site 6. No other mapped NWI wetlands are within the project areas.

A portion of the terminal expansion area overlaps with an apron expansion project that is currently under construction. As part of the previous Environmental Assessment (EA) for the South Terminal Apron Expansion (July 2018), a field review for the presence of wetlands was conducted by Three Oaks Engineering in December 2017. A Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination was issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers on April 2, 2018. Two jurisdictional streams and jurisdictional wetland were confirmed. It was estimated that all of the identified resources would be impacted in the South Terminal Apron Expansion EA. Compensatory mitigation was proposed for the apron expansion project.

Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. completed a Waters of the US Survey in June 2020 (Appendix C). Two intermittent jurisdictional streams and one jurisdictional wetland were identified. Stream 1 is located west of ATCT Site 6 and is crossed by the proposed utility corridor. Wetland 1 is located adjacent to Stream 1. Stream 2 is located to the south of CEP 6b. Refer to Appendix A-Figure 5 for the location of these features in relation to the proposed alternatives.

Wetland 1 is not within an impact area. However, Stream 1 crosses the proposed utility corridor associated with ATCT Sites 2A and 6. The access road is already in place in this location and there are existing utility poles along the access for power and communications. It is anticipated that water, sewer and gas can be directional bored under the stream to avoid impacts. Therefore, the intent will be to avoid all wetland and stream impacts. If it is determined that impacts are unavoidable during the design phase, a Section 404 General Permit may be required by United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). It is assumed that no mitigation will be required.

There would be an increase in impervious surfaces associated with the terminal expansion (approximately 28,000 SF). The ATCT and CEP alternatives propose the following approximate increase in impervious area:

- ATCT Site 6 -63,000 SF- Preferred Alternative
- ATCT Site 2A- 63,000 SF
- ATCT Site 10- 44,000 SF
- CEP 3a – 7,700 SF- Preferred Alternative

## **VI. Environmental Mitigation**

The Airport Sponsor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits or certifications prior to initiating construction activities near or on the environmental resource requiring the permit. Project related permits, certifications, and other mitigation measures required for the proposed action are discussed below. It should be noted that best management practices (BMPs) are considered standard operating procedure and are not considered mitigation; therefore, they are not discussed in this section.

The increase in impervious surface can result in an increase in storm water runoff and the discharge of pollutants into surface water. Prior to construction a storm water permit would be obtained from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. Additionally, erosion and sedimentation of all exposed soils would be minimized by the use of water quality measures including temporary silt fences, check dams and geotextile fabric on steeper slopes, as necessary. These measures are to be employed until the impacted areas are stabilized and vegetative coverage is adequate to minimize erosion.

During construction, Best Management Practices (BMPs) utilizing NCDEQ Minimum Design Criteria measures will be applied to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. Temporary erosion and sedimentation control and stormwater devices, including ponds, may be installed during the construction phase. The Terminal Expansion Proposed Action would also be subject to the Airport's Individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Industrial Permit including the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and Discharge Monitoring program. Based on the proper BMP Terminal Expansion and Tower relocation Proposed Action is not expected to cause adverse impacts to the area's water resources. Therefore, no significant impacts to water resources are anticipated.

### **VI A. Permits and Certifications**

The project will require the following permits or certifications:

1. Individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) Industrial Permit
2. Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Discharge Monitoring Program
3. Section 401 Water Quality Certification
4. NCDEQ Sedimentation Erosion Control Permit
5. Asheville NCDEQ Storm water Permit
6. Asheville NCDEQ Central Energy Plant (CEP) inspection
7. Buncombe County Permitting and Zoning

## **VI B. Mitigation**

Without proper mitigation, the proposed action may exceed the threshold of significance. Mitigation shall be completed for the following environmental categories:

**USFWS:** The USFWS final 4(d) rule, exempts incidental take of northern long-eared bat associated with activities that occur greater than 0.25 miles from a known hibernation site, and greater than 150 feet from a known, occupied maternity roost during the pup season (June 1 – July 31). The project would occur at a location where any incidental take that may result from associated activities is exempt under the 4(d) rule. Although not required, the USFWS encourages avoiding any associated tree clearing activities during the maternity roosting season from May 15 – August 15. For the ATCT alternatives that require tree cutting (Site 6 and Site 2A), it has been proposed to avoid tree cutting if possible/practical during the suggested time frame.

The USFWS concurred that suitable habitat for the Appalachian elktoe does not occur within the project areas. However, this species does occur in French Broad River (project receiving waters). Therefore, the USFWS has requested that proper erosion and storm water controls be designed to mitigate runoff and treat water quality to address concerns for potential indirect impacts to this species. Lastly, the USFWS offered recommendations for protecting the Appalachian elktoe as well as other natural resources. These included:

- Installing sediment and erosion controls before ground disturbance begins.
- Minimizing grading and backfilling and retain native vegetation wherever feasible.
- Stabilize or revegetate with native species as soon as the project is completed.
- Limit ground disturbance to what will be stabilized quickly.
- Use natural fiber matting for erosion control.
- Consider use of pervious materials.

### **Post-NEPA Review Discoveries: Discovery after project approval or after construction has begun on an approved project.**

Once the FAA approved project construction has begun, and if unanticipated historical properties or cultural artifacts are discovered, project construction must stop immediately in the vicinity of the discovered resources. The FAA must determine what actions can be taken to resolve any adverse effects. Within 48 hours of discovery, the FAA must also notify the SHPO/THPO and any tribe, or any other relevant organization in the area that might attach religious and cultural significance to the affected property, and the ACHP. The notification should describe the actions proposed by the FAA to resolve the adverse effects. The relevant entity and the ACHP shall respond within 48 hours of notification and the FAA should take into account their recommendations and carry out appropriate actions. The FAA must also provide a report of the actions when they are completed. (*FAA Order 1050.1F p. 2-12, 1050.1F Desk Reference guidance, implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 36108, 36 CFR part 800, Protection of Historic Properties, Executive Order 12898*).

**Air Traffic Control Tower Relocation.**

As noted in Section V.C above, “Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention”, a Supplemental FEA will be completed which includes documentation of the Environmental Due Diligence Audit (EDDA), Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for the three (3) alternative sites selected for the ATCT relocation. GARAA has indicated that their preferred site alternative for the ATCT is Site 6. However GARAA, ATO and the Memphis ADO will participate in phase two (2) of the Airport Facilities Terminal Integration Laboratory (AFTIL) process and a tower site will be selected during this process. No engineering, design or construction associated with the ATCT relocation shall commence until the Memphis Airports District office has received, reviewed, and incorporated the EDDA and ESA reports in the Supplemental FEA, and issued an updated NEPA determination.

**VII. Agency and Public Involvement**

The following agencies were consulted in the preparation of this Focused EA:

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- N.C. Environmental Review Clearinghouse
- North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)

A public notice was published in the Citizen-Times on September 16, 2020, which advertised a public information session and the availability of the Focused EA for public review. The City accepted comments for 30 days from the date of the notice.

**VIII. Decision**

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that approval of the proposed development 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) and that it 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.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Kimberly M. Brockman  
 Acting Manager  
 Memphis Airports District Office