

Chapter 1.0 – Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the short-term (2006-2011) improvements recommended in the Newport State Airport/Colonel Robert F. Wood Airpark (UUU) Airport Master Plan (AMP) and shown on the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), approved by FAA on April 16, 2008. In summary the projects that are identified include:

- Rehabilitation and Expansion of Based Aircraft Apron
The pavement does not meet Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards for a clear Runway Visibility Zone, thus creating an unsafe condition. Moreover, it is nearly 30 years old, and during an FAA on-site inspection in 2006 it was judged to be in poor condition. The existing aircraft parking demand exceeds the current available parking. During certain conditions aircraft must occupy the transient parking ramp.
- Development of T-Hangars
The development of T-hangars is necessary to meet a recorded need for covered based aircraft parking. The airport currently has no hangars for based aircraft.
- Drainage Improvements
The drainage project is necessary to improve the runway safety area for R/W 04. The area becomes excessively wet after rain.
- Construction of Partial Parallel Taxiway to Runway 16-34
The construction of the partial parallel taxiway to Runway 16-34 is necessary to reduce the risk of aircraft incursions. The partial taxiway will ensure that most aircraft landing and departing Runway 16-34 will minimize taxiing on an active runway.
- Rehabilitation of Runway 16-34 and Intersection
The Runway 16-34 pavement is well over 20-years old and the 2006 FAA inspection report assessed it to be in “poor” condition.

These projects are more completely discussed in the 2008 Airport Master Plan report and shown on the approved ALP which by reference is incorporated as part of this EA.

The airport planning process determined that these projects are vital for the Airport to continue to operate as a safe and efficient facility and to sustain its role as defined in the Rhode Island Airport System Plan (RIASP). The planning effort was also an opportunity to revisit airport development and examine new layouts. The examination also evaluated airport requirements in terms of environmental concerns. The ultimate AMP recommendations reflect the best options for developing the improvements within the existing airport boundaries. The basis for the airport planning safety and operational compliance standards are described in FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5300-13, *Airport Design Manual*.

Using the data developed and reported in the AMP this EA provides the purpose and need for each recommended improvement, an inventory of the environmental conditions, and the results of an environmental analysis associated with each recommended improvement. This EA has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Federal Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ), NEPA regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 1500-1508), and FAA Order 5050.4B.

1.2 Purpose and Need

In general, the purpose of the projects analyzed in this EA is to achieve FAA design standards, maintain pavements in a state of good condition, and construct facilities to meet the current and forecasted demand for the short term (0 – 5 years).

As the Airport sponsor RIAC has a responsibility to ensure that the airport meets the FAA design standards and is compatible with the adjacent areas. This entails providing standard Runway Safety Areas (RSA) on each runway. It also includes ensuring that runway, taxiway and apron pavements are designed to meet FAA standards and maintained in good condition and rehabilitated when necessary.

In order to efficiently and effectively operate the airport RIAC must ensure that it provides for the activity demand necessary to generate airport revenue and continue its role in RI/ASP. To that end it should be noted that aircraft parking at the airport does not sufficiently meet the existing demand, nor is it capable under the current parking configuration, to meet the projected demand. The development of T-hangars and expanding apron space will play a vital role to ensure the Airport can meet current and anticipated demand.

The projects analyzed in this EA will be designed to accommodate the existing and forecasted demand over the 5-year planning period. The historical average annual growth rate for the last ten years is 8.9% for operations and 10% for based aircraft. The recommended forecast from the AMP identifies an average annual growth rate of 3.6% for operations and 3.9% for based aircraft. Considering the historical activity, these forecasts are conservative and are consistent with the natural growth of activity that would occur with or without the proposed improvements.

Table 1.0
AMP Forecasted Activity

Year	Total Operations	Based Aircraft
2006 (Existing)	21,461	40
2011	27,126	52
2016	32,431	63
2026	43,703	87

Source: UUU Airport Master Plan, December 2007

These projects would be completed so the existing Airport can achieve current FAA design standards. In addition, the T-hangars would be constructed to provide for more efficient and effective facilities for use by airport patrons.

1.3 Scope

This EA was created to inform the decision makers and the public of the likely environmental consequences associated with the proposed actions and their alternatives. In addition, the EA provides the FAA with the information necessary to determine whether the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed projects have the potential to significantly impact the environment. Based on this determination the FAA will issue either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), or will require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This EA has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Federal Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ), NEPA regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 1500-1508), and FAA Order 5050.4B. FAA Order 5050.4B defines federal actions as:

- Approval of an airport location;
- Approval of an airport layout plan or revision to an airport layout plan;
- Approval of funding for airport development (including separate funding of plans and specifications for development);
- Requests for the conveyance of government land under Section 516 of the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982 or development or improvement of a public airport; or
- Approval for the release of land.

According to NEPA, all federal actions fall into one of three categories:

- Those normally requiring an EIS;
- Those normally requiring an EA; or
- Those that are normally categorically excluded from environmental review.

In summary, projects requiring an EIS are those that are *likely* to impact the environment. Projects requiring an EA are those that have *the potential* to impact the environment. Projects that are categorically excluded are those that are *unlikely* to impact the environment. Order 5050.4B also states that development actions that involve any of the following require an EA:

- Use of Section 4(f) land (mainly public parks and recreation areas);
- Effect on property included, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places or other property or state or local historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance;
- Land acquisition for conversion of farmland, scoring more than 160 on Form AD-1006, protected under the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) to nonagricultural use through federal financial assistance or through conveyance of government land;
- Wetlands, coastal zones, or floodplains; and
- Endangered or threatened species.

Further, NEPA regulations (i.e., 40 CFR §§ 1500.1.c) also require that federal agencies integrate environmental considerations into the early planning stages of proposed actions.

1.4 Documentation

Using the aforementioned guidance, the following sections of this EA detail the planning process that was employed during the AMP effort to examine the range of possible alternatives for each identified issue and the basis for selecting preferred alternatives. The anticipated impacts for each proposed action are presented in Section 4 and mitigation measures are presented in Section 5. In addition to the EA, a Drainage Evaluation Study, Sound Evaluation and a full Phase I Archaeological Survey were completed, and they are included as Appendix D, E, and F, respectively, in this report.