



## Environmental Assessment – Agency Meeting Minutes

Date: November 4, 2015 – 2:30 PM  
Location: Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO) Conference Room  
AIP Project: Environmental Assessment  
Subject: Agency Scoping/Coordination Meeting

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### In Attendance via Phone/Webinar:

Carol Anderson, Environmental Protection Agency – NEPA Compliance and Review Program  
Jim Davis, La Plata County Public Works  
Kara Hellige, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Ingrid Hewitson, Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment  
Kandice Krull, Federal Aviation Administration  
Daniel Murray, La Plata County Historic Preservation  
Scott Storie, CO Dept. of Transportation – Aeronautics  
Paul Lee, Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment – Air Division  
Gina Glenne, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Sarah Fowler, Environmental Protection Agency – Clean Water

### Airport Staff

Kip Turner  
Tony Vicari

### Airport Commission

Rich Bechtolt

### Consulting Team

Colleen Cummins, Jviation

## 1. Welcome/Opening Comments

Colleen Cummins opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending. She introduced herself and her affiliation with Jviation – the Airport’s consultant. Jviation has been working with DRO, the City, and County on the Master Plan since mid-2013 as well as engineering projects.

Colleen asked everyone to introduce themselves.

The purpose of this meeting is to introduce agencies to the proposed action that will be evaluated within the Environmental Assessment (EA) and to learn of any issues/concerns, level of coordination anticipated, and outreach efforts during the process.

Colleen reviewed the meeting objectives:

- Awareness of the Master Plan Recommendations (Proposed Action)
- Understanding of the Environmental Assessment (EA) purpose and content
- Familiarity with the EA process and opportunities for coordination
- Knowledge of the project's next steps
- Agency concerns

## **2. Purpose of Environmental Assessment (EA)**

Colleen noted that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a procedural law that applies to federal agencies (in this case the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)). The EA is required to meet NEPA guidelines and provide informed decision making by federal agencies. The overall purpose is to determine if the proposed project would significantly impact the environment.

The process also promotes coordination and communication with other parties – federal, state, and local agencies, adjacent property owners, tribal groups, etc.

She also explained that the EA would identify a purpose and need based upon the information contained in the current Master Plan and that alternatives reviewed and analyzed in the Master Plan would be carried forward into the EA. The Master Plan is currently being finalized.

## **3. Master Plan Recommendations**

A brief overview of the Master Plan recommendations was given by Colleen including the approved aviation forecast, facility requirements, and the Master Plan's preferred alternative – construct new terminal on east side of airfield. This would also include other infrastructure such as apron and taxiway development, on-airport circulation, auto parking, rental car parking, and employee parking. She continued by stating based upon the analysis completed as part of the Master Plan and the coordination effort completed, the Airport, Airport Commission, Planning Advisory Commission (PAC), Consultant (Jviation), County, and City decided this was the best alternative to move forward for long-range plans for the airport.

However, it was emphasized that going into the environmental process, reasonable alternatives will be evaluated as well – including renovating existing building and constructing a new terminal on the west side. Other options were considered during the Master Plan but deemed not feasible for a number of reasons (see Master Plan page at [www.flydurango.com](http://www.flydurango.com) for additional details).

A brief review of the terminal timeline was given detailing the EA length (2015 – 2017), design (2018-2019), and construction (2019-2021).

Questions from attendees:

- Is the FAA providing money for development or do they simply issue a permit?

*The FAA will issue an approval and contribute funding for the project. Funds for the project will also come from state funding programs – CDOT, Aeronautics – as well as local dollars. The project also will require an approval process – Airport Layout Plan.*

#### **4. Environmental Assessment Process**

Colleen explained the EA process from preparation through documentation and that we were currently in the preparation phase – Purpose and Need, Identification of Alternatives, Alternative Analysis, and Affected Environment. Public outreach, agency, and tribal coordination will occur throughout the process and as the process advances it is typical for additional groups to become involved. As noted previously, the purpose and need and alternatives will be pulled from the Master Plan as well as some of the affected environment baseline information. Field work associated with the affected environment portion won't begin until April due to weather related issues. Impacts will be reviewed following field work, surveys, and preliminary design.

The guidance followed for the EA is contained within three FAA documents:

- FAA Order 5050.4B, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions
- FAA Order 1050.1F, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures
- FAA 1050.1F Desk Reference

A figure was shown detailing the direct study area for the EA. This study area includes the entire airport boundary as well as the portion of State Highway 172 that may be included as part of a new airport entrance. An indirect study area is also included as part of the process which includes adjacent property owners such as those here tonight.

A brief overview of impact categories was reviewed and an explanation given for those that will be briefly discussed and dismissed – coastal resources, floodplains, and wild and scenic rivers – as not present within the study areas. Areas of focus include wetlands, cultural resources, endangered species, noise, and secondary/socioeconomic based upon data gathered during the Master Plan.

Kara (Army Corps of Engineers) noted that although they didn't verify all the wetlands during the Master Plan process, they did concur that approximately 57 acres existed. Ecosphere identified the wetlands in the north with remote sensing and aerial review but did flag all to delineate as it is a very difficult site. A letter was sent from the Corps preliminarily agreeing that wetlands existed and that they appear to be Waters of the U.S. The Corps suggested that further field work be conducted once the planning has been refined.

Colleen added that since the Master Plan is in its final stages and we now have a better understanding of where the proposed road and other development would occur. Consequently, Ecosphere will conduct additional survey work within a refined area to better define the wetland areas.

A brief overview of the noise contours completed as part of the Master Plan was given and an explanation that an additional noise analysis is included in this EA.

Next, Colleen reviewed the alternative components that will be included as follows:

- New or redeveloped terminal building
- New or expanded terminal parking
- Partial parallel taxiway (east side alternative only)
- Utility Improvements
- New or realigned terminal loop road
- Borrow site
- New airport entrance road from State Highway 172 – will be analyzed separately from the terminal development

Questions from attendees:

- Is there only one runway and taxiway?

*Yes, DRO only has one runway and one parallel taxiway. Should the east side alternative be selected a partial parallel would be constructed on the east side. The need for a second runway or an extension to the existing was not identified within the planning period of the Master Plan.*

- Was the *Pediocactus knowltonii* (cactus) considered during the biological survey done as part of the Master Plan?

*Our subconsultant, Ecosphere, searched for listed species known to occur in the area but not positive this was looked for specifically.*

***Ecosphere's report was reviewed following the meeting and the cactus was included as part of their review and they determined that there was no potential for them to exist within airport boundaries.***

- What was the extent of wetlands identified during survey done with Master Plan?

*Ecosphere's field survey included all property within the existing airport boundary. As shown on the figure, several small wetlands were identified south of the runway and on the east and west sides. The majority of wetlands are located north of the runway. Coordination was done with the Army Corps during the Master Plan. Additional field surveys and coordination with the Army Corps will be done as part of this process.*

- Interested in seeing the full build out of the east side alternative, i.e. is expansion possible without impacting additional wetlands?

*The full build out of the alternative is available on the Master Plan website ([www.flydurango.com](http://www.flydurango.com)). The relocated entrance road is the project component that would impact wetlands in this initial phase and there are no plans to expand the road to meet the 20-year planning period. However, a portion of the stream may be impacted when the partial parallel is extended to the north end of the runway.*

*It is important to note that the future expansion will be driven by the airport's growth and not by a year. The terminal size, parking, apron, etc. area all triggered by enplanement numbers as identified in the Master Plan. Thus, if the numbers are not reached in the 20-year planning period, an expansion would not occur.*

- What is the reason for wanting to relocate the airport entrance? CDOT requirements?

*Discussions with CDOT occurred during the Master Plan process which revealed the desire to relocate the existing airport entrance further to the east to alleviate safety concerns. It was decided that regardless of terminal expansion outcome (east or west side) that the entrance should be relocated.*

- Will a scoping letter be sent out?

*Yes, a letter will go out to agencies but it should be known that the FAA has approved the scope of work. Thus, the letter's intent will be to generate input on the process and how involved agencies would like to be.*

- What does a Master Plan for a regional airport such as DRO look like? Is it done internally or is the FAA involved?

*The FAA is involved in the process and provides funding to complete as does CDOT and the Airport Sponsor. FAA reviews the entire document and plan set and provides feedback but only approves the forecast and Airport Layout Plan.*

- Will land acquisition be a part of the EA?

*No, no land is needed for the proposed projects.*

- Will the preliminary design include the new entrance road?

*Yes, it will.*

- Will the alternatives include different locations for the entrance road?

*Based upon the analysis done in the Master Plan, the EA will consist of a No Action and a build alternative for the new entrance road.*

- As wetlands exist in the area the new road would transect the Corps suggests keeping the impacts within the realms of a nationwide permit.

*Unfortunately, we anticipate a few acres of impact which would require an individual permit.*

- If over a half acre of impact, the Corps will require additional alternatives in the analysis.

*Understood, we will work closely with the Corps to ensure we include the appropriate level of analysis.*

## 5. Next Steps

Colleen reviewed the project schedule, noting the EA is slated for approximately two years. The timeframe is subject to coordination with agencies, review, and agency and public comment. She noted coordination is critical throughout the process and reviewed a list of groups that will be included.

Outreach efforts include airport tours, social media, community open houses, Airport Advisory Commission meetings, and Joint Study Sessions (City and County).

Four community open houses are scheduled during the process, with two being held on the same day at different times and locations to give the community a better opportunity to attend.

From now until January 2016, portions of the document will be drafted (Introduction, Purpose and Need, and Alternative Analysis); tribal coordination conducted, and some baseline data will be done including existing noise and air quality analyses. The field work (wetland, endangered species, and culture resources) cannot happen until the weather becomes warmer (April/May 2016).

Colleen thanked everyone for attending and directed everyone to keep their eyes open for the EA website (e-mail to be sent).

## 6. Action Items

- Colleen to send e-mail out to all participants and invitees once EA website is live and note location of this presentation.
- Colleen to distribute letter to agencies. The letter will include detailed information about alternatives and environmental baseline information collected during the Master Plan as well as what is scoped as part of the this EA.