



Environmental Assessment – Southern Ute Indian Tribe Meeting Minutes

Date: November 4, 2015 – 11:00 AM
Location: Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO) Conference Room
AIP Project: Environmental Assessment
Subject: Coordination Kick-Off Meeting

In Attendance:

Kandice Krull, Federal Aviation Administration (via phone)
Mark A. Hutson, SUIT - Air Quality Program
Danny Powers, SUIT - Air Quality Program
Jason Mietchen, SUIT – Natural Resources (Range and Water)
Lena Atencio, SUIT – Natural Resources
Germaine Ewing, SUIT – Natural Resources (Lands)
Travis Wheeler, SUIT – Natural Resources (Water)
Jacob Gorlick, SUIT - Planning
Edward Box III, SUIT - Planning

Airport Staff

Kip Turner
Tony Vicari
Lise MacArthur

Airport Commission

Rich Bechtolt

Consulting Team

Hilary Fletcher, Jviation
Colleen Cummins, Jviation

1. Welcome/Opening Comments

Hilary Fletcher opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending. She introduced herself and her affiliation with Jviation – the Airport’s consultant. Hilary asked everyone to introduce themselves. Jviation has been working with DRO, the City, and County on the Master Plan since mid-2013 as well as engineering projects. Today is the official kick-off of the EA with several meetings planned throughout the day.

The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) 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.

Hilary 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

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. Hilary added that if anyone is missing that should be present, please let Jviation know. It was noted that the chairmen and vice-chairmen had prior commitments and were not able to make the meeting.

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 Hilary 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. She emphasized the extensive amount of coordination that was completed and that all documentation can be found on the Master Plan's website.

It was stressed 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 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:

- Given that the facility is going to be on the east side, will 309 be moved rather than in front of the BP and the Crossfire offices?

Hilary responded, yes, there is an alternative to put the main entrance of the airport in a different location. The consulting team is aware from CDOT the challenges of the intersection's current location, in that it's not going to be sufficient. There's going to have to be some improvements to the entryway of the airport and that's probably a relocation of the main entryway.

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. The next phase of the EA, evaluation, will occur next year.

Colleen explained the alternative analysis from the Master Plan will be evaluated again in the environmental process and the environmental baseline information from the Master Plan will also be used in the EA. There are 16-18 different environmental categories to be reviewed, most of which were given a preliminary review in the Master Plan. Cultural resources, wetlands, and endangered species habitat were identified, and will be given further review in the EA.

Colleen introduced the study area and what areas and features are included. The difference between direct and indirect study areas was discussed. The indirect area includes potential impacts to residents living off of 309A. Colleen showed a list of impact categories to discuss, noting some will not be evaluated in detail – coastal resources, floodplains, and wild and scenic rivers - as they are not applicable to this project. Impact categories discussed in detail included air quality and water as the SUIT has jurisdiction over them, as well as cultural resources due to the artifacts found during the Master Plan. Coordination with the SUIT will continue throughout the process.

Colleen discussed the specific environmental categories the consulting team has focused on include cultural, threatened and endangered species, noise, socioeconomic impacts, and wetlands. Noise contours will be developed for 2015, the base year, and 2020, the future year. These are based on 24 hour day and night average levels, not a single event. They also take into account aircraft, amount of operations, and flight patterns.

The wetland map completed as part of the Master Plan was reviewed and a brief discussion on endangered species ensued.

Colleen then moved on to alternatives, explaining that the next meeting will have a more detailed discussion. However, the basic alternatives include a new or redeveloped terminal, parking lot expansion, utility improvements, partial parallel taxiway (east side alternative only), new or realigned terminal loop road, and a borrow site (for fill). All these items will be one set of alternatives with a second set for the airport entrance road. A No Action will be included for both the road and the terminal alternatives per NEPA requirements.

Questions from attendees:

- The airport's water source is primarily from the infiltration gallery and some of those water rights are associated with the Tyner ditches. The Tribe has water rights in those ditches as well so we're interested in proposed impacts and increased water usage.

Colleen replied, as part of the Master Plan, there's a Water and Wastewater Master Plan that was developed which is available online – www.flydurango.com. The amount of water needed for the proposed development will be considered within the EA as well. Coordination with the SUIT on this topic will also be done.

- Clarification on the "No Action" associated with the airport entrance road and terminal was requested.

Colleen responded that a "No Action" alternative is required for comparison purposes under NEPA. The No Action for the road would leave the road as is and the No Action for the terminal would leave terminal as exists.

- Doesn't CDOT require the airport entrance to be relocated?

CDOT would prefer the entrance to be relocated for safety reasons and has noted that if a terminal expansion happens the entrance needs to be relocated.

- Are possible improvements to the southern end of 309A to accommodate traffic from Farmington and Aztec being contemplated?

No, that portion of the road is outside the scope of this project.

- Regarding the borrow site, are there plans for any disturbance of airport property near the river or will it be up near the mesa?

No, disturbance would be on the mesa, along 309A and State Highway 172 to accommodate the entrance.

5. Next Steps

Hilary discussed that there is extensive coordination involved in the EA and the consulting team is working through it. She reiterated that if anyone is missing to please let them know. It was discussed that the coordination will include a series of meetings, open houses, and tours. Communication will be disseminated via social media, airport commission briefings, information sessions, study sessions, and meetings. A public hearing will also be included at the end of the project.

Hilary noted the EA website would be live shortly – link provided from main airport website to EA. She also noted that the consulting team would be using virtual city hall where the community can pose questions and see feedback. Twitter and Facebook would also be used to announce meetings.

Hilary reviewed the upcoming project schedule to include what meetings/outreach efforts have been scheduled. Colleen added that the open houses would be done in the City of Durango and somewhere in the County (day and evening). They are hopeful the various meeting times and locations will give the public more opportunity to attend.

Hilary discussed that the next steps are working on the purpose and need chapter and beginning the documentation of the alternatives. More details will be given at the next meeting.

Questions from attendees:

- The SUIT has jurisdiction for the air quality process. These EA's take a lot of time and we need to look at staff resources. Would it be possible to send a more detailed schedule so we can ensure our resources are available?

Yes, we will get you a more detailed schedule and keep you well-informed. A subconsultant, KB Environmental will be conducting the air quality analysis for existing and future conditions. We will be sure to get them your contact information.

- We're responsible for air quality emissions, some of the planning members through the environmental commission should probably be put on your list, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the State of Colorado Environmental Commissioners, there are 6 Commissioners – they are actually the jurisdictional body.

Kandice will confirm if a letter went to Southern Ute Indian Tribe State of Colorado Environmental Commission. Letters went out to 29 different tribes. Southern Ute responded and maybe 4 others have as well to date.

Hilary concluded by giving out contact information for herself, Colleen, and Kip. She noted an email will be sent to everyone with links to the website. Colleen added that everyone should be sure they left their email address on the sign in sheet.

A 30 day notice will be given prior to the next meeting. Web conferences are available; however, the next meeting will be on site.

6. Action Items

- Kandice Krull to see if letter was sent to the SUIT State of the Colorado Environmental Commission.
- Colleen Cummins to send e-mail/letter to attendees and invitees with EA website once live.
- Colleen Cummins to send more detailed schedule to SUIT Air Quality Division.
- Colleen Cummins to have KB Environmental Sciences (subconsultant for Air Quality) contact SUIT Air Quality Division.