



Town of Mammoth Lakes

Planning & Economic Development Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: July 14, 2021

AGENDA TITLE: Opportunity for the public to provide verbal or written comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Mammoth Yosemite Airport Terminal Area Development Project.

Applicant/ Property Owner: Town of Mammoth Lakes

REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:

Community & Economic Development

Sandra Moberly, Director

Kimberly Cooke, Associate Planner

OBJECTIVE:

1. Receive Staff Presentation
2. Planning & Economic Development Commission (PEDC) discussion
3. PEDC action to:
 - a. Take public comments on the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prior to the close of the 45-day public comment period on July 28, 2021.

SUMMARY:

Proposal:

Receive public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addressing the potential environmental impacts of proposed improvements to Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH). The principal improvements associated with the project include a new 39,288-square-foot passenger terminal building, a new aircraft parking apron, aircraft de-icing facilities, an 8,400-square-foot maintenance building with eight bays, connecting taxiways, and supporting infrastructure such as access and service roads, parking lots, and new potable water, wastewater disposal, and other utility facilities.

Project Name:

Mammoth Yosemite Airport Terminal Area Development Project

Location:

1300 Airport Road

Size of Property:

A 22-acre portion of the 196 acres of Airport land owned by the Town

Zoning:

Airport (A)

General Plan:

Airport (A)

Environmental Review:

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2019100384) was prepared for the project. A Notice of Availability was circulated to advertise the 45-day public review and comment period beginning June 14,

2021, and ending July 28, 2021. Based on the analyses provided in the DEIR, it was found that with mitigation measures incorporated there would not be a significant effect on the environment as a result of the project.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On December 5, 2018, Town Council directed staff to present the Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) to PEDC for consideration and then return to Town Council on December 19, 2018, for formal adoption. On December 12, 2018, the PEDC considered the 2018/19 – 2023/24 ACIP and found that it was consistent with the Town's General Plan. Town Council adopted the 2018/19 – 2023/24 ACIP on December 19, 2018.

Adoption of an ACIP does not compel the Town to complete or fund any of the listed projects, but it does make the identified projects eligible for Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding. The projects identified in the ACIP are expected to be funded, in part, by FAA grants. A portion of grant funding is allocated for staff time related to each project and the Town typically pays a 9.34% match. Large projects are eligible for additional Discretionary AIP funding, to be determined through negotiations with the FAA. Appropriate environmental review must be completed for all identified projects prior to construction. All proposed airport actions that are subject to FAA approval require environmental impact analyses to be prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project is also subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which is why an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to NEPA and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to CEQA have been prepared for the project.

The Terminal Area Development Project was awarded an AIP entitlement grant in August of 2017 for the purpose of conducting environmental analysis for the proposed project. However, work was not started for a variety of reasons, including airline service changes at the airport in 2018. The FAA subsequently authorized the grant to be used for preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to NEPA, and authorized funding following the Town's completion of an update to its Terminal Area Development Plan (TADP). Specifically, the FAA required the Town to update the aviation forecast and analyze the new critical aircraft conformance to the physical layout of the airport (safety areas, parking and movement areas, etc.). The Town completed its Airport Aviation Activity Forecast Addendum in May 2019, and it was accepted by the FAA in a letter dated June 19, 2019. At that time, the project became eligible to move forward with the environmental analysis with reimbursement from the FAA for preparation of the EA.

On June 26, 2019, Town Council authorized consulting agreements with Wallace Environmental Consulting, Inc., and Mead & Hunt, Inc., for the preparation of the CEQA and NEPA review for projects included in the ACIP. Funding for the preparation of the EIR was not eligible for FAA grant reimbursement, so Town Council approved the proposed costs associated with preparing the EIR to be paid out of the Town's Airport Capital Reserve Fund Account.

The June 26th Staff Report to Town Council stated that completion of the environmental analysis would not necessarily lead to the terminal or apron projects moving on to the design or construction phase. It was stated that in order to comply with Federal and California environmental disclosure requirements, it is prudent to conduct a comprehensive evaluation that includes all of the potential projects at the same time. The staff report also noted that the Town has the option to complete the project in one phase or two phases with the apron being constructed first and the terminal building being designed and constructed at a future date, or not at all.

It should be noted that the environmental review process for this project began before the well-publicized efforts of Inyo County to take the necessary steps to improve Bishop Airport and obtain FAA approval to initiate commercial air service. Inyo County has indicated that they expect to meet these requirements and begin commercial service in December 2021. In consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration and other local

stakeholders, and with the full knowledge of Inyo County, the Town has taken the approach that it is prudent to complete the comprehensive environmental evaluation so that the Town is in a position to respond to future changes in airport service and air service needs in the region. Many of the projects analyzed herein are not anticipated to begin for several years, if at all, to meet possible future demand. All projects addressed in this analysis and in the ACIP are reviewed on an annual basis within the Town and with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure the Town (Airport Sponsor) is taking the necessary steps to respond to changing air service needs.

The scope of the environmental analysis for both NEPA and CEQA evaluates the implementation of the TADP at the Mammoth Yosemite Airport. The project includes construction of a new passenger terminal, aircraft parking apron, related infrastructure, maintenance building (including Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting ARRF vehicle), commercial apron, and associated infrastructure.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Environmental Impact Report and a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Assessment were published in The Sheet on October 19, 2019. The notices were circulated to invite comments from interested agencies and the public as to environmental concerns that should be considered in the EIR. The notices also provided information regarding a public scoping meeting scheduled for October 24, 2019, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The scoping process is intended to solicit comments from governmental agencies and the public regarding the scope of the environmental analysis to be included in the environmental analysis. Scoping comments were accepted over a period of 30 days. The Town did not receive comments from the public however, scoping comments were received from the following agencies:

- Department of Transportation (Caltrans District 9)
- Department of Toxic Substances Control
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Environmental concerns raised in the responses to the NOP include the following:

- Impacts on designated Scenic Highway (US 395).
- Traffic impacts and relation to planned road improvements.
- Biological resources, including animal movement patterns.
- Existing or potential future environmental contamination and release of asbestos or lead-based paint during any required demolition.
- Impacts on surface and groundwater quality.

Once the scoping process concluded, the consultant team began preparation of the Draft EIR. The purpose of the EIR is to inform decision-makers and the public about the potentially significant adverse environmental effects of a project and to describe mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid these effects. The EIR must also include consideration of cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, irreversible environmental effects, and alternatives to the proposed project. Each of these subjects is addressed in the Draft EIR.

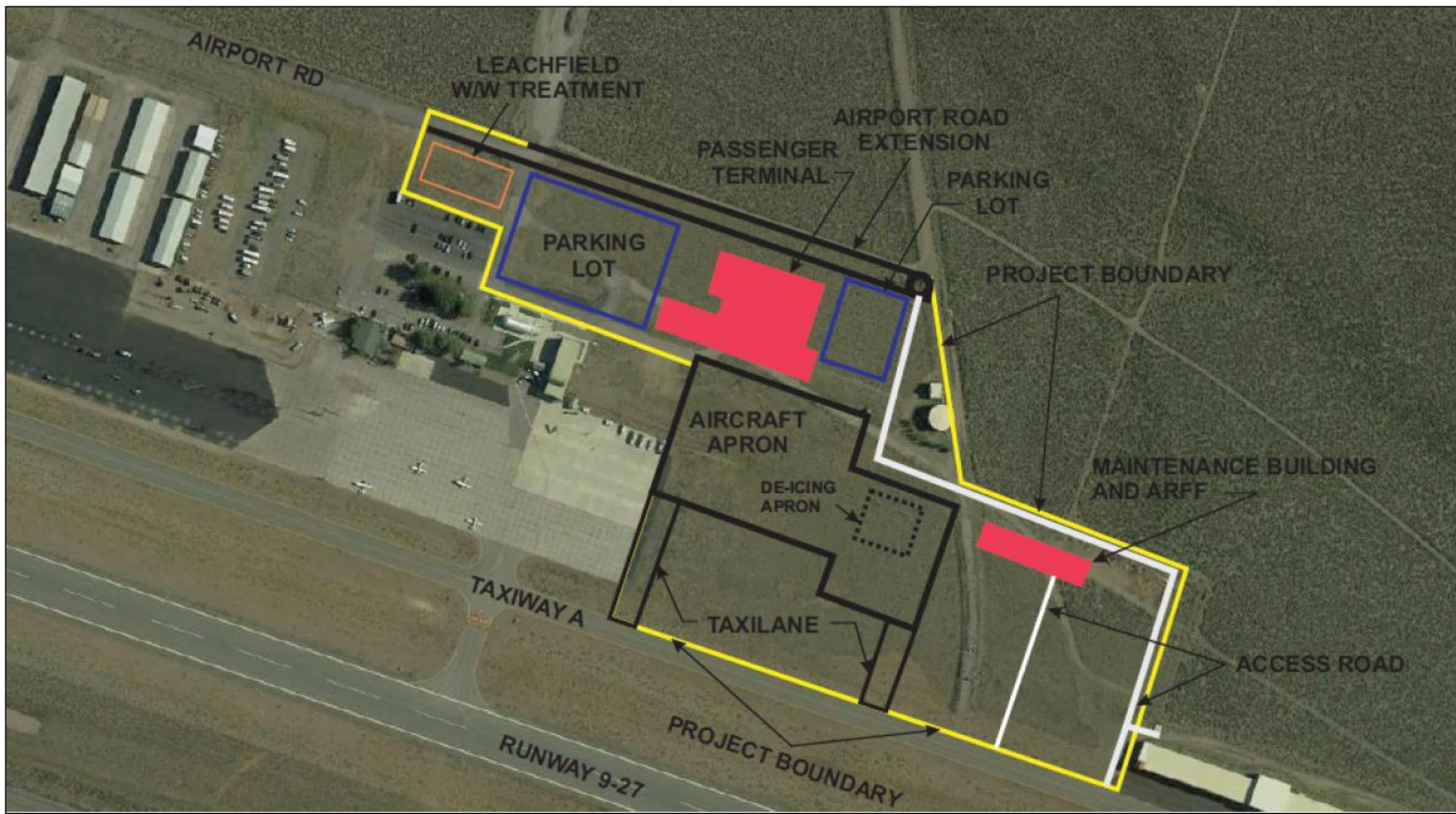
Project Proposal:

The proposed project is referred to as the Mammoth Yosemite Airport Terminal Area Development Project. It involves improvements to the Mammoth Yosemite Airport passenger terminal area as described in the *Terminal Area Development Plan for the Mammoth Yosemite Airport* (Brandley 2017). Proposed terminal area improvements would occur within an approximately 22-acre area generally east of the existing passenger terminal building and south of the proposed Airport Road extension (**Figure 1**). The new passenger terminal, vehicle parking lots and new aircraft aprons will occupy approximately 8.7-acres of undeveloped land within the 22-acre area.

The proposed terminal area improvements are intended to allow the airport to function more efficiently and effectively to meet existing and projected demand. Additional terminal capacity would be required to accommodate the peak travel demands of both arriving and departing passengers. Future aviation demand is

described in the 2017 aviation forecast and the 2019 addendum, which indicate that Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) will experience incremental increases in passenger enplanements and charter flights from destinations throughout the western United States over the 10-year forecast period. Another objective of the project is to ensure the safe and efficient use of navigable airspace in the U.S, in accordance with the statutory mission of the FAA. Moreover, it is the policy of the FAA under 49 U.S.C. Section 47101 (a)(6) that airport development projects provide for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and the quality of the environment of the United States. The project is intended to be consistent with FAA objectives and policies. In addition, the project is intended to be consistent with the mission of Caltrans Division of Aeronautics, which is to provide a safe, sustainable, integrated, and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability.

Figure 1: Project Site Plan



Project Improvements:

- **New Passenger Terminal.** The project includes construction of a new passenger terminal with a maximum floor area of approximately 39,288 square feet. The terminal building would include lease space for airlines and restaurant/retail uses, public space, and office and utility areas.
- **Airport Road Extension and Parking:** Airport Road would be extended approximately 850 feet east from its current terminus to provide vehicle access to the new terminal, terminating at a cul-de-sac. The project proposes two new parking areas: 1) an approximately one-acre parking area west of the terminal would provide 130 automobile spaces primarily for rental car company vehicles; and 2) an approximately 0.46-acre parking lot east of the terminal would provide 60 automobile spaces for commercial passengers and

other visitors. Parking lots would be lighted with floodlights that will be provided with full cut-off shield features.

- **Aircraft Parking Apron:** The project would include a new aircraft parking apron, approximately 183,996 square feet in area, on the airside of the new terminal, adjacent to and east of the existing apron. The new apron would accommodate three Q400 turboprop aircraft or three CRJ700 regional jet aircraft in a taxi-in/taxi-out type operation. The commercial apron would be lighted with floodlights that will be provided with full cut-off shield features.
- **Aircraft De-icing Apron:** A separate concrete de-icing apron is proposed adjacent to the aircraft parking apron to accommodate de-icing operations for commercial and business air traffic during winter operations.
- **Connecting Taxiways:** Two taxiways, approximately 230 and 280 feet long and both approximately 75 feet wide, would connect the new aircraft parking apron and de-icing apron to the existing Taxiway A. These taxiways would be surfaced with asphalt concrete.
- **Maintenance Building:** The project would include a new eight-bay maintenance building east of the de-icing apron with a total floor area of approximately 8,400 square feet. One of the bays would house Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) operations; the remaining bays would be used for storage of snow removal and other maintenance equipment. A parking area that would accommodate approximately 22 vehicles would be installed in front of the maintenance building to the north, and a paved operations area will be provided to the south. A new access road, approximately 800 feet in length and 25 feet in paved width, would connect this facility to Taxiway A.
- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure to support the new terminal building and other improvements would include the following:
 - Wastewater Disposal - Wastewater generated by the new terminal and maintenance facilities would be transported in new collection lines to a new 2,500-gallon septic tank and leach field, to be located generally west of the proposed terminal building. The septic tank and leach field would be installed in accordance with Mono County onsite wastewater disposal standards.
 - Potable Water – The project would include extension of new potable water lines to the new terminal and maintenance building. The lines would be adequately sized to provide required consumption and fire protection pressures and volumes, as determined by the Airport Engineer. The existing storage tank and pump house would be retained.
 - Other Utilities - Electricity is provided to the airport by Southern California Edison (SCE). Electrical service would be extended to proposed new facilities. Telephone service to MMH is provided by Verizon. MMH is also served by the Digital 395 fiber optic cable that can provide high-speed communications and internet service. Services would be extended to new facilities from the existing vault. New security features, include alarmed doors, security cameras, and security fencing. As noted, the aircraft parking apron, automobile parking lots, and access road to the new terminal would be lighted with floodlights. These floodlights would be provided with cutoff features such that full light is available on the apron and parking lots but not visible from the runway, US 395, or other surrounding areas.

Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures:

The Draft EIR analyzes potential impacts in the following areas: 1) Aesthetics and Visual Resources; 2) Air Quality; 3) Biological Resources; 4) Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources; 5) Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources; 6) Greenhouse Gas Emissions; 7) Hazards and Hazardous Materials; 8) Hydrology and Water Quality; 9) Land Use, Population, and Housing; 10) Noise; 11) Public Services and Recreation; 12) Transportation; 13)

Utilities and Energy; 14) Cumulative Impacts; 15) Alternatives; and 16) Other – Significant and Unavoidable Environmental Impacts, Irreversible Environmental Commitments, and Growth-Inducing Impacts.

Based on the analysis provided in the Draft EIR, it was found that there would not be a significant effect on the environment as a result of the project with mitigation measures incorporated. The four Proposed mitigation measures include the following:

- **BIO-1:** Floristic field surveys of the project site shall be conducted during the blooming period(s) for the potentially occurring special status species prior to construction, including the Masonic rock cress. At a minimum, one survey shall be conducted during the month of May, and another shall be conducted during the month of July. If any special-status plants are identified within areas of potential construction disturbance, they shall be identified on construction plans with a 10-foot buffer and avoided to the extent feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, a special-status plant mitigation plan shall be prepared and implemented by a qualified biologist. The plan will include the identification of a nearby relocation site that can be secured by the airport, and the methodology to relocate perennial species and/or broadcast seed, prior to ground disturbance.
- **BIO-2:** Prior to the start of construction work, the Town shall conduct a pre-construction survey on the project site between April and June to determine the presence of western white-tailed jackrabbit. If western white-tailed jackrabbit is found on the project site, the Town shall contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to develop and implement measures to conserve western white-tailed jackrabbit. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, removal of individual rabbits from the project site or implementation of a buffer zone around rabbit areas until rabbits can independently forage on their own. No construction work shall occur on the project site until consultation with CDFW is completed.
- **CULT-2:** If any subsurface archaeological resources are encountered during construction, all construction activities within a 50-foot radius of the encounter shall be immediately halted until a qualified archaeologist can examine these materials, initially evaluate their significance and, if potentially significant, recommend measures on the disposition of the resource before work near the discovery can resume. The Town shall be immediately notified in the event of a discovery, and if the resources may constitute tribal cultural resources, the Town shall notify the appropriate Native American representatives. The Town shall be responsible for retaining qualified professionals, implementing recommended mitigation measures, and documenting mitigation efforts.

Prior to construction, construction personnel shall receive brief “tailgate” training by a qualified archaeologist in the identification of archaeological resources and the protocol for notification should such resources be discovered during construction work.

- **CULT-4:** If project construction encounters evidence of human burial or scattered human remains, work shall be halted in the immediate area and the contractor shall immediately notify the Mono County Coroner and the Town. The Town shall notify other federal and State agencies as required. The Town will be responsible for compliance with the requirements of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, and the CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(e), with direction provided by the County Coroner.

If the human remains are determined to be Native American, the County Coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), which will notify and appoint a Most Likely Descendant. The Most Likely Descendant shall have 48 hours to make recommendations regarding the disposition of the remains following notification from the NAHC of the discovery. If the Most Likely Descendant does not make recommendations within 48 hours, the Airport shall, with appropriate dignity, re-inter the remains in an area of the property secure from further disturbance. Work shall not resume in the area of the encounter until the final disposition of the remains has occurred.

Next Steps

The EIR and EA for the project were prepared concurrently and analyze the same project components. The NEPA and CEQA process have different noticing, public review timelines and approval process requirements, which is the reason the EIR document is the only document being considered at this meeting. A separate public workshop and public hearing will be held on July 19th for the EA document. The approval authority for the EA document is the FAA.

Responses to comments received on the Draft EIR during the public review period (ending July 28th) will be prepared and included in the Final EIR document. The Final EIR must be considered by Town decision-makers prior to a decision on the project. Before the Town can approve the project, it must first certify that the Final EIR was completed in compliance with the provisions of CEQA, that the Town has reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR, and that the Final EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Town on the environmental impacts of the project. Mitigation measures described in the Final EIR will be included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, which will be adopted by the Town as a means of ensuring that mitigation measures are implemented in conjunction with the project.

The Notice of Availability was published in The Sheet on June 12th and notices was mailed to the Town's CEQA document distribution list. No public comments were received at the time this report was written.

II. STAFF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning and Economic Development Commission provide comments on the Draft EIR document and allow the public an opportunity to provide verbal or written comments on this item.

Attachments

Attachment A: Draft EIR

Attachment B: DEIR Appendices

Attachment C: Notice of Availability