

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Airport Improvements Project  
Tacoma Narrows Airport (TIW)  
Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington  
April 2022

**Introduction**

This document serves as the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and provides the final agency determinations and approvals for the federal actions necessary to implement the improvements described below at the Tacoma Narrows Airport (TIW). This FONSI is based on the information and analysis contained in the Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) dated April 2022, which is incorporated herein by reference. The FEA has been prepared pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Title 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508, and in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and FAA Order 5050.4B *National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*.

**Proposed Action**

Pierce County Planning and Public Works (PCP&PW; Airport Sponsor) owns and operates the Tacoma Narrows Airport (TIW) in Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington. PCP&PW is proposing to construct airport improvements that would include the following:

- Obstruction Removal: Evaluation of trees that penetrate the Airport FAR Part 77 Surfaces and removal of obstructions,
- Installation of Wildlife Fencing in areas on Airport property currently unfenced,
- Taxiway A Relocation, Taxiway B4 Relocation, and Apron Expansion,
  - Relocation of Taxiway A to meet the current FAA standard runway-taxiway, separation requirements,
  - Relocation of Taxiway B4 to eliminate direct access from the apron to the runway,
  - Expansion of the apron taxilane north of Taxiway A4 to provide continuous aircraft access from the north to south aprons, and
- Stormwater Pond Relocation: Relocation of an existing stormwater pond to accommodate the Taxiway A relocation.

Chapter 1 and Figures 3 and 4 of the FEA provide a description and a graphic depiction of the Proposed Action.

**Federal Actions**

The requested Federal actions and approvals necessary for this project to proceed are:

- Unconditional approval of the TIW Airport Layout Plan (ALP) to depict those portions of the Proposed Action subject to FAA review and approval pursuant to 49 USC 47107(a)(16)(B).
- Determination of project eligibility for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding in accordance with 49 United States Code § 47101-47144.

**Purpose and Need**

Chapter 2 of the FEA presents the Purpose and Need. PCP&PW’s purpose of the project is to improve safety by addressing deficiencies identified in the MPU to bring the Tacoma Narrows Airport

into compliance with FAA design standards and recommendations for C-II Airports. The project is needed because the Airport's current layout does not meet FAA standards as further discussed and defined in Chapter 2.2 of the FEA.

### **Alternatives**

Chapter 3 of the FEA presents the alternatives analysis. The FEA identified and evaluated reasonable alternatives that may accomplish the objectives of the Proposed Action in accordance with NEPA, FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B, and FAA design standards. Section 3.3 of the FEA presents the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative, and two additional alternatives for obstruction and stormwater pond removal that were identified during the master planning process and in accordance with the FAA design standards as identified in FAA Advisory Circular 150/5300-13A, Table 3-5. Section 3.3 describes the alternatives and/or alternative components that were eliminated from consideration. The FEA carried three alternatives forward for evaluation:

#### No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, no Airport improvements including obstruction removal, taxiway relocation, fencing, and stormwater pond removal would take place and the current ALP would not change.

#### Proposed Action Alternative:

The Proposed Action meets the project Purpose and Need as stated in Section 2 of the FEA by addressing the following elements: Obstruction Removal, Fencing, Taxiway Relocation, and Stormwater Pond relocation as follows:

- **Obstruction Removal:** Under the Proposed Action, trees currently penetrating, or within 12.5 feet (an estimated 5-year growth, as defined by FAA Engineering Brief 91 – Management of Vegetation in the Airport Environment) of penetrating the following surfaces would be removed using the construction methods as further described in Section 3.3.1.1 of the FEA:
  - Runway Object Free Area
  - 20:1 Obstacle Clearance Surface
  - 34:1 Obstacle Clearance Surface
  - 40:1 Departure Surface
  - Visual Part 77 Surface
- **Fencing:** Portions of the Airport property are currently fenced with chain-link fencing, as shown in Figure 7: *Proposed Action – Fencing* of the FEA. Due to the presence of wildlife in the areas surrounding the airport, the proposed fencing would be a chain-link wildlife fence to improve the safety and security for operational areas. Wildlife fencing would be installed along the majority of the south and west sides of the Airport operational area, with the exception of one area along the Northwest side. Fencing in that area would be constructed in conjunction with future development in that area and the environmental impacts would be evaluated under a subsequent environmental determination.
- **Taxiway A Relocation, Taxiway B4 Relocation, Apron Taxilane Expansion:** Under the Proposed Action, Taxiway A would be removed from its current location and reconstructed 50 feet to the east, at the same 5,100-foot length, and with a reduced width of 50 feet, 25 feet less than the current Taxiway A width of 75 feet. Approximately 1,250 feet of the apron taxilane between Taxiway B4 and the segmented circle would be expanded. This would provide a Group II Taxilane Object Free Area between the north and south apron to meet FAA design standards and recommendations. Taxiway B4 would be relocated approximately 225 feet south of its current location to eliminate the current non-standard direct access from the apron to the runway.
- **Stormwater Pond Relocation:** Under the Proposed Action, stormwater generated on the Airport would be directed to an infiltrated facility that would be constructed underground in

the location of the current pond. As shown in Figure 10: Proposed Action – Infiltration Facility, the stormwater would be collected by the storm drain system and conveyed to an infiltration facility constructed in the same location of the existing pond. The infiltration facility would discharge to the same underlying porous soil for infiltration. Approximately 53,000 cubic yards (CY) of material would be required to fill the existing pond in order to construct the taxiway under the Proposed Action.

#### Stormwater Pond Removal – Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, a detention vault would be constructed and buried in the location of the current pond in lieu of an infiltration facility. This alternative would likely be used if the Geotechnical Investigation indicate that the existing soils are not suitable for infiltration; the investigation is proposed to occur early in the design phase. Approximately 25,000 CY of fill would be required to fill the existing pond in order to construct the taxiway.

#### **Environmental Consequences**

Chapter 4 of the FEA evaluates each of the environmental impact categories identified in FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B. No thresholds of significance are expected to be exceeded with the Proposed Action. Most impacts would be minimal and occur during construction.

The following resource is not present in the project area and will not be affected by the Proposed Action: farmlands. The following resources are present in the project area, but most impacts would be minimal, occur during construction, and significant impacts are not expected: Wetlands, Land Use, Coastal Resources, Section 4(f), Natural Resources and Energy Supply, Historic, Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Resources under Section 106, Visual (Taxiway Relocation and Stormwater Pond Replacement), Water Resources, Flood Plains, Ground Water, Surface Water, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. The implementation of Best Management Practices during construction will be employed to further reduce impacts to these resources.

The remaining categories with any impact by the Proposed Action are discussed below. A full discussion of these categories, as well as the complete analysis conducted for all categories, can be found in the FEA.

*Air Quality:* Under the Proposed Action, anticipated impacts to air quality are minor and would be limited to construction activities. Construction activities for all alternatives would result in temporary, localized direct negative impacts to air quality from exhaust generated by diesel and gasoline-powered equipment including bulldozers, trucks, and chainsaws; and fugitive dust generated on the construction site during dry conditions. Construction-related activities would likely result in slight degradations in air quality during the construction period but are expected to be minor and short term.

*Climate:* Under the Proposed Action, emissions of GHG from diesel- and gasoline-powered equipment and additional vehicular traffic would increase slightly during construction. The Proposed Action would not result in changes to aircraft or airport operations that could affect GHG emissions. Obstruction Removal would result in 50 acres of forest and 2,055 individual trees selectively removed under the Proposed Action. Removal of these trees would result in a permanent reduction in the current CO<sub>2</sub> storage capacity of the Airport, and a slight increase in the Airport's contribution of CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere.

*Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention:* During construction, ground disturbance could potentially expose contaminated soils from previous spills. Leaks or spills from construction equipment could occur and different forms of solid waste would be generated. The construction contractor would be required to develop a Hazardous Materials Control Plan to address storage and handling of hazardous materials (including fuel and lubricants) and spill response. The Plan would include best management practices (BMPs) to minimize the risk of leaks and spills. Solid waste would be removed and properly disposed of by the contractor. Construction contracts would include a provision that if contaminated soil or groundwater is suspected or encountered during construction activities, the construction contractor would contact PCP&PW with Ecology for appropriate removal.

*Biological Resources:* Under the Proposed Action, new fencing in currently un-fenced areas could interrupt travel routes used by local terrestrial mammals. Mammals traveling between the airport property and off-site areas could be impeded by the fence, and expend additional energy getting through, over, or around it. The fence would not completely enclose the airport property and therefore it is unlikely that terrestrial mammals would be permanently trapped or killed due to the presence of the fence. The Proposed Action could have the following impacts to streaked horned lark: interaction with construction equipment and/ or construction personnel during project construction; disturbance from elevated noise levels during project construction; and, short- and long-term alteration of potentially suitable habitat. These impacts are not considered significant and would be reduced through mitigation measures described below.

*Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use:* Construction activities under the Proposed Action would result in localized, short term noise impacts from operation of construction equipment. Under the Proposed Action, airport operations would not change and aircraft-related noise would not increase. The 65 DNL noise contours are expected to stay within the Airport property and not change. No noise sensitive uses, or noise sensitive areas are within the 65 DNL. No incompatible land use impacts are anticipated.

*Socioeconomics:* The Proposed Action would not cause shifts in patterns of population movement and growth, place significant demands on public services, or cause changes in business and economic activity on the surrounding communities. Based on demographic information, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to adversely affect low-income or minority populations. No discrimination based on minority status or low income would result with implementation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would generate construction-related employment that would have short-term economic benefits to Pierce County. The Proposed Action may encourage the location of businesses in Pierce County. However, these economic impacts, while beneficial to the local economy, are not anticipated to be significant enough to result in shifts in population or changes in local land use.

*Visual Effects:* Under the Proposed Action, the removal of trees from the Airport could result in light emission impacts from runway and taxiway lighting systems to properties located near the Airport. The loss of trees under the Proposed Action would not alter rural forested visual character of the area, or create light emissions that would create annoyance or interfere with normal activities. The Proposed Action would not alter rural forested visual character of the area and would not result in a light emissions creating an annoyance or interfering with normal activities.

## **Mitigation**

No significant impacts were identified as a result of the Proposed Action; however some mitigation measures are included as part of the Proposed Action and to bring the project into permit compliance. These mitigation measures are provided below. Additional measures to avoid, reduce, or minimize impacts during project construction are provided in Appendix H of the FEA.

### *Biological Resources:*

- Obstruction removal will be completed outside of the streaked horned lark breeding/ nesting season (March 15-September1)
- Surveys for streaked horned larks will be completed prior to Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the taxiway construction to identify presence and location of active streaked horned lark nests. If active nests are located within the project vicinity, the streaked horned lark protection plan will be implemented to minimize impacts to the extent feasible, including work buffers, changes to construction timing/ sequencing or other measures.
- Dissuasion techniques will be employed to attempt to dissuade streaked horned larks from utilizing grassy areas impacted by the taxiway improvements in Year 3. Low profile airfield barriers will be placed on the two grass pads east of the taxiway prior to nesting/ breeding season to deter larks.
- Taxiway improvements will be sequenced to minimize work within the streaked horned lark

use area, starting at the southern end of the airfield and working north. Construction in the area occupied by streaked horned larks will be limited to August and September (Phase 2 and Phase 3 of taxiway construction).

- Construction haul routes will be located on existing paved areas, existing gravel roads, or areas where pavement was recently removed and will avoid suitable streaked horned lark habitat and active nest sites, if present.
- Staging areas will be located as far as practical from suitable streaked horned lark habitat, such as in existing paved areas adjacent to existing airport facilities and buildings. For example, the South Apron may be ideal. While staging on unpaved areas will be limited if possible, available paved surfaces at the airport are limited and some staging on grassy areas may be required. Areas that have historically included streaked horned lark sightings (i.e. streaked horned lark use area) will be avoided. The airport will conduct surveys in Year 3 during the lark breeding season and will adjust the locations of proposed staging areas if needed.
- Lunch break and field briefing/ meeting areas will be located in the staging area (s), within existing buildings or a temporary construction work trailer, or in another designated area away from suitable streaked horned lark habitat.
- Construction crews and equipment will be prohibited from leaving the designated work area(s) within the construction site on either foot or in vehicles.
- To reduce the potential of bird strikes, construction equipment and vehicles associated with the project will not exceed a travel speed of 10 miles per area within construction areas.
- All disturbed areas not finished with pavement will be restored with a grass/ herbaceous seed to stabilize exposed soils and provide habitat for streaked horned larks.
- Construction signing and lighting on areas that are grass, between the existing taxiway and the apron, will be completed outside of the lark breeding season.
- A Streaked Horned Lark Protection Plan (Appendix A of the Biological Memo) will be followed to minimize impacts to nesting larks and chicks/ fledglings during construction.

## **Public and Agency Involvement**

Chapter 5 of the FEA summarizes the public outreach, agency, and tribal coordination undertaken for the project.

FAA gathers information from the public, tribes, and relevant agencies with jurisdiction over the resource categories listed in FAA Order 1050.1F. The FAA initiated consultation for the Proposed Action in March 2019 with contacts made to Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), USFWS, and the five tribes with known interest in the Project area including the Puyallup Tribe, Nisqually Tribe, Squaxin Island Tribe, Muckleshoot Tribe, and Suquamish Tribe.

A Biological Assessment was submitted to USFWS and initiated formal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA on July 20, 2021, for impacts to the streaked horned lark. USFWS issued the Biological Opinion for the Project on January 31, 2022, as included in **Appendix H** of the FEA.

FAA initiated National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation with DAHP on March 12, 2019, then initiated subsequent consultation with DAHP for additional site investigation locations on December 10, 2021. DAHP reviewed the Cultural Resource report and the addendum describing the additional site investigations for the Proposed Action and concurred that the properties addressed in the report are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and that the Tacoma Narrows Airport does not represent a potential historic district.

For public involvement, an online public open house for the Proposed Action in the Master Plan Update process was held from April 12, 2021 to May 3, 2021. Thirteen people signed in to have the

opportunity to provide comments. Notification of the scoping process was advertised through the project web page. In addition, a postcard was used to describe the public engagement opportunities specifically for the EA.

The public comment period on the Draft EA began on February 16, 2022 with the publication of the Notice of Availability in the Tacoma News Tribune and closed on March 17, 2022, for a total of 30 days. The Draft EA was made available in electronic format on Pierce County's project website and in hard copy format at the Airport.

Comments on the Draft EA were received from twenty-six commenters. Three comments were made in support of the Project. Many of the commenters voiced concerns about the extent of tree removal. Responses reiterated that the tree removals are needed to remove obstructions to navigation and increase safety for Airport operations. Another repeated concern was for potential future runway extension and/ or Airport expansion. Responses explained that this project does not involve a runway extension or expansion of the Airport, and that these types of projects would require a separate environmental review under NEPA. The public comments and responses to these comments are presented in **Appendix G** of the FEA.

### **Environmental Finding and Approval**

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and 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. As a result, the FAA will not prepare an environmental impact statement for this action.

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Approved By:  
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Date: April 25, 2022

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