

**Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Dakota-Minnesota Airports District Office  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
For Runway 14/32 Extension & Other Associated Airport Improvements  
at Morris Municipal Airport  
Morris, Stevens County, Minnesota**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for a project analyzing Runway 14/32 extension and other associated airport improvements at Morris Municipal Airport (MOX).

In accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, FAA Order 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, and based on the evaluation in the Final Environmental Assessment (FEA), there are no significant impacts associated with the proposed project. Therefore, a Federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared and a FONSI is being issued. This FONSI provides a review of the Proposed Action, mitigation requirements, and the basis for the FAA's finding. Specific details are defined further in the FEA.

#### **I. Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to pursue the following infrastructure goals:

1. Address infrastructure in poor condition and at the end of its useful design life;
2. Enhance airfield safety and efficiency for Airport users;
3. Increase aircraft storage capacity for based Airport users; and
4. Improve facilities for the design aircraft fleet using the Airport.

The need for the Proposed Action is based on the following deficiencies at MOX:

1. The existing runway, apron and hangar taxiway pavement is deteriorating and needs to be replaced;
2. The existing pavement and airfield geometry, including runway length and apron layout do not meet the needs of Airport users and aircraft;
3. The available aircraft storage space is insufficient to meet current and planned demands; and
4. Other miscellaneous FAA and State airport design standards are currently not met.

The Proposed Action will meet the Project purpose by addressing the needs for the Project through completion of the following objectives:

1. Improve the airfield pavement condition;
2. Meet runway length and strength needs for users;
3. Provide safe and efficient aircraft parking apron layout;
4. Accommodate user aircraft storage needs; and
5. Meet other applicable FAA and State airport design standards.

Further purpose and need details can be located in Chapter 2 of the FEA.

## II. Alternatives Considered

In accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, the EA identified and evaluated all reasonable alternatives. The Final EA provides analysis of all the alternatives analyzed.

The No Action Alternative identifies the consequences if the City of Morris were to maintain the existing Airport configuration, presuming existing pavements were reconstructed in-place at the Airport. The No Action Alternative also includes the Airport working with Stevens County and Agrilite Electric Cooperate to extinguish or modify on-airport encumbrances. Agreements that are modified would require Airport Sponsor approval to enter Airport property, and ensure actions will not interfere with the operation of the Airport now and into the future.

The No Action Alternative does not: 1) meet runway length and strength needs for users; 2) provide safe and efficient aircraft movement and parking areas/layout; or 3) accommodate user aircraft storage needs.

Four preliminary primary runway alternatives (A1, A2, A3, and A4) were identified. These alternatives all meet the Airport user needs, and therefore were evaluated as possible alternatives for the Project.

### **Alternative A1: Extend Runway 14-32 southeast by 1,398 feet to 5,400 feet, implement ½-mile precision approach to Runway 32**

Alternative A1 results in a 5,400-foot runway length with a precision approach to the Runway 32 end to meet Key system airport requirements. It would require 160 acres of land acquisition, residential homeowner relocation, impacts to the Federal Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), the potential relocation of CSAH 7, and runway widening to 100 ft.

### **Alternative A2: Extend Runway 14-32 southeast by 898 feet to 4,900 feet, implement ½-mile precision approach to Runway 32**

Alternative A2 results in a 4,900-foot runway length with a precision approach to the Runway 32 end to meet Key system airport requirements. It would require over 142 acres of land acquisition, impacts to the WPA, the potential relocation of CSAH 7, and a runway widening to 100 feet.

### **Alternative A3: Extend Runway 14-32 southeast by 897 feet to 4,899 feet, implement ¾-mile non-precision approach to Runway 32**

Alternative A3 results in a 4,899-foot runway length with a ¾-mile non-precision approach to the Runway 32 end. The Airport is maintained as an Intermediate facility. This option would require 116 acres of land acquisition, impacts the WPA, and may result in the relocation of CSAH 7.

Runway Alternatives A1, A2, and A3 are dismissed due to unacceptable environmental impacts to the City of Morris, including land acquisition and the potential for a realigned public road.

Two preliminary terminal/hangar alternatives (T1, T2) were identified. These alternatives meet the Airport user needs, and therefore were evaluated as possible project alternatives.

## **Alternative T2: Construct New Terminal/Hangar Area in New Quadrant, Maintain Runway 4-22**

This Alternative maintains crosswind Runway 4-22 and constructs a new terminal/hangar area in another quadrant of the Airport, such as to the southeast of Runway 4-22. This alternative results in constructing a new hangar area separate from existing infrastructure and services. Actions would include grading the overall site, preparing new hangar sites (grading), constructing a new parking lot, constructing new aircraft storage hangars, constructing vehicular access roads and fencing and extending underground utilities.

Alternative T2 was dismissed due to unacceptable impacts to the City of Morris, including developing a new remote hangar area separated from existing Airport infrastructure.

### **III. Proposed Action**

#### **Alternative A4: Extend Runway 14-32 southeast by 897 feet to 4,899 feet; maintain 1-mile non-precision approach to Runway 32. (EA Figure 3-1)**

Alternative A4 meets the Project's purpose and need and results in the longest runway length without triggering reclassification to a State Key Airport classification and associated design standards. Alternative A4 results in a 4,899-foot runway length with no changes to the existing 1-mile non-precision approach to the Runway 32 end. The Airport is maintained as an Intermediate facility. It requires up to 50 acres of land acquisition but does not impact the constructive use of the WPA or CSAH 7.

Alternative A4 is the single alternative to meet all preliminary screening criteria (utilize existing Airport infrastructure, maintain intermediate airport classification, avoid public road impacts, avoid Section 4(f) resource impacts, and minimize land acquisition).

#### **Alternative T1: Develop Within Existing North Quadrant, Close Runway 4-22. (EA Figure 3-4)**

Alternative T1 (Develop within Existing North Quadrant, Close Runway 4-22) is the preferred terminal/hangar area alternative because it is the only alternative that meets preliminary screening criteria to utilize existing Airport infrastructure and meets the project purpose and need. Alternative T1 provides approximately 16 acres of new terminal area development space to the south and east of existing terminal/hangar area infrastructure within existing Airport property with the closure of turf crosswind Runway 4-22.

Closing the crosswind runway has an effect on airfield wind coverage and, therefore it needs to be considered. FAA's recommended wind coverage is 95%. Crosswind Runway 4-22 is needed for 155 takeoffs and landings annually based on wind coverage. The Airport Sponsor considers the 94.21% wind coverage for FAA Airport Reference Code (ARC) A-I and B-I aircraft on the primary runway alone to be acceptable for airport operations. Runway closure is needed to provide sufficient space to meet the Project purpose and need. This reduction in airport utility is acceptable to the Airport Sponsor considering the resulting benefit of an expanded terminal/hangar area in the existing development quadrant.

Actions would include expanding the existing apron to the south, decommissioning turf crosswind Runway 4-22, extending the hangar site taxilane to the east, preparing new hangar sites (grading), constructing aircraft storage hangars, constructing vehicular access roads and fencing, and extending underground utilities.

### **Airport Property Encumbrances. (EA Figure 2-3)**

Two (2) blanket encumbrances exist over the entirety of one or more airport-owned parcels and are not subordinate to MOX. The first encumbrance known as MIN-RE-001 provides Stevens County the right to explore for, mine, and remove iron ore or other minerals over airport Parcel 2 totaling 80 acres. The second encumbrance known as UTL-RE-003 is a right-of-way easement providing Agrilite Electric Cooperative the right to construct, operate and maintain electric transmission lines anywhere within airport Parcels 1-1963 and 2 totaling 160 acres. Both airport Parcels 1-1963 and 2 contain at least a portion of Runway 14/32 and 4/22.

To the best of the City's knowledge, Stevens County has not executed upon its right to mine for minerals on airport Parcel 2. Agrilite Electric Cooperative has constructed various underground electric lines within the right-of-way area to serve the airport. One line traverses around the Runway 14/32 Safety Area and is trenched below Runway 4/22.

MIN-RE-001 and UTL-RE-003 encumbrances are not subordinate to the airport as required. These existing agreements may deprive the airport of its ability to fulfill its obligations for the land to function as a safe and efficient airport. The right granted in MIN-RE-001 would be terminated. The blanket easement in UTL-RE-003 would be eliminated and replaced with an easement defining existing utility corridors with subordination to the airport. These changes are needed so existing or potential future land uses will not interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the airport. No significant impact is anticipated to Stevens County or the Airport given the County has not executed upon their mineral rights. Existing Agrilite Electric Cooperative electric lines would be preserved under a revised right-of-way easement. There are no known plans to establish new electric lines within Airport property.

MOX will work with the parcel owners to extinguish or modify on-airport encumbrances on Parcels 1-1963 and 2 so the use will not interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the airport as the preferred alternative.

The FEA evaluated the following elements of the Proposed Action (EA Figure 3-6):

- Reconstruct, strengthen, and groove Runway 14-32 pavements;
- Acquire 17.7 acres of land in fee simple. Parcels are discontinuous parcels owned by same landowner. Parcels include 06-0049-001 (west parcel – 9.71 acres), 06-0052-000 (east parcel – 0.54 acres), and 06-0127-000 (south parcel – 7.45 acres).
- Extend Runway 14-32 by 897 feet to the southeast for a total length of 4,899 feet, including grading, clearing, and paving;
- Re-grade the existing runway shoulder and Runway Safety Area (RSA);
- Extend parallel Taxiway A to serve to the extended Runway 14-32;

- Install Medium Intensity Runway Edge Lights (MIRL), 4-box Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) lights, Runway End Identifier Lights (REIL), and lighted airfield guidance signs for Runway 14-32;
- Establish a non-precision GPS-based instrument approach to the end of the extended Runway 32 end with no lower than 1-mile visibility and a decision altitude of 250 feet (same as existing);
- Install obstruction light on the top of a light pole in the terminal/hangar area near the Runway 14 end;
- Reconstruct existing aircraft parking apron and hangar taxiway pavements;
- Expand aircraft parking apron by approximately 5,100 square yards (SY), and install eight (8) “nested” aircraft parking tie-down positions;
- Construct 130’ x 24’ hangar site access road to existing hangars;
- Install approximately 1,850 linear feet of fencing (5-feet high) and vehicular access gates around the public perimeter of the terminal/hangar area;
- Update the Airport Ordinance in accordance with the proposed ALP per Minnesota State Statutes and Rules;
- Extinguish or modify on-airport encumbrances for Parcels 1-1963 and 2 (EA Figure 2.3); and
- Close and decommission Runway 4-22 with project elements consisting of:
  - Extending hangar site taxiway from existing apron (600’ x 35’) onto decommissioned Runway 4-22 area;
  - Grading four (4) future hangar sites on decommissioned Runway 4-22;
  - Constructing up to four (4) aircraft storage hangar buildings on decommissioned Runway 4-22;
  - Constructing 700’ x 24’ hangar site access road, and adjacent automobile parking area on decommissioned Runway 4-22.

Project construction is expected to begin in 2020 and would occur in annual phases over approximately three (3) years.

#### **IV. Environmental Consequences and Mitigation**

After careful analysis and consultation with various state and federal resource agencies, the Airport selected the proposed action as the preferred alternative. This alternative satisfies the purpose and need for the project while causing minimal environmental impacts. The FEA discusses the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action. Mitigation commitments are discussed below.

The Airport shall implement the following mitigation measures as a condition of environmental approval of the proposed development listed in this FONSI to support existing and proposed aeronautical activities at the Airport:

- The Airport will obtain any necessary permits prior to beginning construction.
- For impacts to 0.10 acre of wetlands, wetland mitigation will be required as a condition of a Permit under Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act as well as the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). The Airport is planning offsite wetland mitigation banking within the same watershed. Wetland mitigation banks

are available within the Pomme de Terre watershed in Stevens County. Potential wetland mitigation banks that may be used are identified as Account 1565 or 1605.

- The Airport will protect wetlands and waters of the U.S. not directly impacted by the Proposed Action during construction.
- Use of BMPs to avoid additional unnecessary and/or unauthorized impacts to surface waters and aquatic resources.
- Extinguish or modify on-airport encumbrances on Parcels 1-1963 and 2 so the use will not interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the airport. The right granted in MIN-RE-001 would be terminated. The blanket easement in UTL-RE-003 would be eliminated and replaced with an easement defining existing utility corridors with subordination to the airport.
- In the event that human remains or cultural resources are discovered during construction, all work will cease until MOX notifies appropriate authorities, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), State Archeologist, and the FAA Dakota Minnesota Airports District Office (ADO). MOX shall protect the area with carefully placed tarps or construction back fill until cultural resource concerns have been appropriately addressed, and MOX will take action to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the Archeological Resources Protection Act, as appropriate.
- During construction, in the event that previously unknown contaminants are discovered or if a reportable spill occurs, work shall cease until the Airport notifies appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies.
- If endangered species are sighted during construction, work shall cease in the immediate area of the endangered species and all sightings shall be reported to the USFWS, MNDNR and the FAA.

## **V. Public Review and Comment**

Public involvement is a vital component of the NEPA process. The Draft EA was released for agency and public review from January 14, 2020-February 13, 2020. Agency and public comments received during the comment period were considered in the development of the FEA. Responses to all verbal and written comments are provided in the FEA and Appendices H and I.

During the Draft EA comment period, Airport property title research discovered two (2) blanket encumbrances existing over the entirety of one or more the airport-owned parcels. Information regarding extinguishing or modification of the encumbrances was included in appropriate sections of the FEA and included as an errata to the FEA.

## **VI. Finding**

I have carefully and thoroughly considered the facts contained in the attached EA. Based on that information, I find the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives of Section 101(a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and other applicable environmental requirements. I also find

the proposed Federal action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or include any condition requiring any consultation pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. As a result, the FAA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this action.

Having met all relevant requirements for environmental considerations and consultation, the proposed action is authorized to be taken when other requirements have been met. These decisions are taken pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 40101, et seq. The FAA findings regarding the proposed airport improvements, and any necessary funding for the Morris Municipal Airport, constitute an order of the Administrator, which is subject to review by the Courts of Appeals of the United States, in accordance with the provisions of Section 1006 of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended, 49 U.S.C. § 46110.

APPROVED: ✓

DISAPPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_



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Dakota-Minnesota Airports District Office

DATE: 2/25/2020