



## LAKE ELMO AIRPORT FEDERAL EA / STATE EAW

# Public Event #3 Meeting Minutes

Oak-Land Middle School  
November 6, 2017

### Agenda

- 6:00 – 6:30 P.M. – Open house with informational boards and an opportunity to visit with project team members to learn about the Lake Elmo EA/EAW activities.
- 6:30 – 7:00 P.M. – Presentation on environmental effects of the proposed airport development
- 7:00 – 7:30 P.M. – Presentation Q&A regarding the environmental effects information presented
- 7:30 – 8:00 P.M. – Community/MAC one-on-one engagement session to discuss environmental concerns, ideas and opportunities with project team members

### MAC/Mead & Hunt Attendees

Chad Leque  
Dana Nelson  
Neil Ralston  
Joe Harris  
Brad Juffer  
Amie Kolesar  
Gary Schmidt  
Michael Madigan  
Evan Barrett  
Colleen Bosold

### Representing

Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Metropolitan Airports Commission, Lake Elmo Airport Manager  
Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Metropolitan Airports Commission  
MAC Commissioner District F  
Mead & Hunt  
Mead & Hunt

*The attached report represents this writer's interpretation of items discussed during the meeting. Any corrections or additional information should be brought to our attention for clarification.*

Presentation slides and informational boards presented at this meeting, as well as the agenda, newsletter and a handout provided to the public, are available on the project website at [www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment/Documents-and-Links.aspx](http://www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment/Documents-and-Links.aspx).

### The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Present the environmental effects of proposed airfield improvements at Lake Elmo Airport.
- Provide an opportunity for community members to ask questions, discuss concerns and share ideas with project team members and for project team members to respond to inquiries from community members.

### **Items discussed were as follows:**

Todd Streeeter, moderator for the meeting, introduced himself and welcomed everyone. He stated this is the third public meeting of the Lake Elmo Airport environmental review process and introduced the agenda for the evening. He mentioned that the presentation and handout materials from tonight's meeting are all available on the Lake Elmo Airport project website. He went over the presentation Q&A format listed on the agenda and asked people to follow those guidelines during Q&A, and invited people with questions on material not covered during the presentation to seek out project team members during the one-on-one engagement session following the presentation Q&A. He then turned it over to Chad Leqve (MAC Director of Environmental Programs).

Chad welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, and stated he hopes the dialogue this evening is helpful in getting everyone up to speed on where the project team is at in the process of evaluating the environmental effects of the proposed development at Lake Elmo Airport. He presented a slide with a summary of the concerns raised by airport neighbors, which was developed in response to a suggestion made by a community member at the last Community Engagement Panel (CEP) meeting. He said it was a good idea because it helps the project team to maintain focus and sensitivity to the concerns of the community. He pointed out that the concerns shown on the presentation slide serve as the foundation for a lot of the resources available to the public, such as the Frequently Asked Questions on the project website and the project newsletters. He stated this is an example of the dialogue that's taking place, and wants the public to know their concerns are being heard and the project team is doing what it can to address those concerns while also meeting the Purpose and Need of the project. He also mentioned the environmental review process has a public review component built into it. There will be a public review period once the draft document has been published, along with an opportunity for the public to provide comments and share ideas and concerns for formal response and consideration in the planning process. He stated the project team will formally respond to those comments in the final document. He then turned it back over to Todd.

Todd then introduced Evan Barrett (Mead & Hunt project manager), who he said would be giving tonight's presentation on the environmental effects.

A copy of this presentation can be found at: [metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment/21D-Public-Event-3-11-06-2017.aspx](http://metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment/21D-Public-Event-3-11-06-2017.aspx)

Evan introduced himself as an airport planner for Mead & Hunt, who is helping the MAC complete the environmental review for the Lake Elmo Airport improvements. He welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and mentioned that there's a handout of the presentation so the public can follow along. He said this meeting is a continuation of a process that has been underway since the beginning of the year. This is the third of four public events. The first was an introduction to the environmental process; the second covered the project's Purpose and Need and alternatives. Evan said tonight he would be covering the environmental effects of the preferred alternative. He said the team is in the process of evaluating the preferred alternative against a list of environmental impact categories defined by federal and state regulations. He then explained the environmental effects evaluation process. The FAA identifies significance thresholds and factors for the different National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) categories to help determine if an effect (or impact) is considered significant. He explained that NEPA and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) provide the umbrella under which we evaluate

these effects. There are several special purpose laws under the NEPA and MEPA umbrella, such as the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act or the National Historic Preservation Act.

Evan then went over the NEPA categories that were evaluated in detail, how each was evaluated and the results of each area thus far:

- Biological Resources –
  - Approximately 20 acres of on-airport trees will likely need to be removed for the new pavement associated with the runways and taxiways as well as to clear airspace surfaces associated with the new runway.
  - Project team confirming with the FAA that there are no off-site trees that will need to be removed.
  - Project team identified two federally-listed species (northern long-eared bat, a threatened species, and rusty patched bumblebee, an endangered species); northern long-eared bat may be present in the tree removal areas, so impacts will be avoided and minimized using US Fish & Wildlife/USDOT-recommended measures; the rusty patched bumblebee has documented habitat within 2 ½ miles of the airport, however there is no suitable habitat for this bee in the project impact area.
  - Project team identified a state-listed threatened species (Blanding’s turtle) that may be present in both wetland and upland areas, so impacts will be avoided and minimized using MnDNR-recommended measures.
- Air Quality – Minimal impacts during construction, but neither operational nor construction emissions would exceed the FAA thresholds of significance.
- Cultural Resources – Project team did field surveys of historic age (50+ years) structures on and surrounding the airport and an archaeological survey (shovel testing). The FAA has made a determination of no effect to cultural resources and has sent that determination to the State Historic Preservation Office for concurrence. The FAA is also conducting nation-to-nation consultation with Native American Tribes as required for NEPA actions under federal law.
- Farmlands – Roughly half of the acreage of the airport is currently leased for agricultural use. Approximately 43 acres of on-airport farmland would be converted permanently to aeronautical use; project team is consulting with US Department of Agriculture to determine significance of effects.
- Hazardous Materials & Solid Waste – project team identified 17 known hazardous materials sites within one mile of the Airport (on and surrounding), but none will be affected by the project. Groundwater contamination plume would not be affected due to water table depth. Solid waste generated by the project will be disposed of according to applicable laws and regulations.
- Land Use –
  - Evan noted that a significant amount of his presentation at the last public event was on residential and ground transportation land use effects because it was a key evaluation criterion for comparing the different alternatives and selecting the preferred alternative. This was because the team made a concerted effort to make sure that the selected alternative balanced the land use effects and came up with a solution that minimizes these effects.
  - Residential – there will be minor changes to visual flight rules traffic pattern area (where aircraft circle when landing under visual flight rules conditions – this area extends about

- 1.2 miles off the end of each runway in all directions), but in terms of overall flight patterns over the area, there's not a lot of difference. Project team evaluated MnDOT's recommended State Model Safety Zones to evaluate the effects of the various alternatives. The MAC will convene a Joint Airport Zoning Board (JAZB) consistent with Minnesota Statutes prior to the project being implemented.
- Ground Transportation – design of realigned 30<sup>th</sup> Street N. can accommodate forecasted traffic volume and type; travel time will increase an average of 46 seconds in either direction.
  - Wildlife Attractants – tree removal and agricultural lease reductions are expected to reduce wildlife attractants on the airport.
  - Noise – The threshold for significance of noise is a 65-decibel day night average sound level (DNL) associated with annual usage of the airport. It does not measure the sound of specific aircraft events. It is an annual average based on number of operations, type of aircraft, time of day, runway ends used on a regular basis, etc. Project team modeled that based on historical data and forecasted operations. The 65 DNL contour is entirely contained on airport property for both the 2025 no-action and preferred alternative scenarios. Evan mentioned that the 65 DNL is the outermost solid line on the presentation graphic. The outermost dotted line is the 60 DNL contour, which is not considered a significant noise impact, but was evaluated and will be included in the environmental document for informational purposes.
  - Visual Effects – there will be lighting systems relocated and new lighting systems installed as part of the project. Evan showed and explained the three different types of lighting systems used on the airfield. Some of the lighting systems will move closer to the residential areas; however, lighting systems will only be fully operational (on and at full brightness) when activated by pilots. The project will relocate and extend primary runway lighting systems, and will add these systems to the crosswind runway, which is currently unlit. The project team is looking at ways to make sure the lights have as little effect on the neighbors as possible. Some options may include customized light settings, light baffles, and different options for fencing.
  - Water Resources
    - Wetlands – from a regulatory perspective, wetlands are the primary impact associated with the project. About 2 acres of wetlands (several portions of small wetlands located throughout the airport) will be filled and those will need to be replaced elsewhere at a ratio of 2:1. With about 2 acres of wetland impact, that means about 4 acres of replacement wetlands somewhere else.
    - Surface Water – net increase of 550,000 square feet of impervious surface associated with runways, taxiways and 30<sup>th</sup> Street N., meaning more stormwater coming off the pavements and not infiltrating right where it lands. There are a lot of federal, state and local performance standards and requirements the MAC will be required to meet in the design of the stormwater runoff – these will be identified in the environmental document. It is the project team's opinion all these standards and requirements can be met with structural controls and best management practices.
  - Cumulative Impacts – This category provides a context for the proposed action in terms of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within a reasonably close geographic area to the project. The environmental document will characterize the things that have happened to date in the vicinity of the airport, things that are happening on and around the airport right now, and reasonably foreseeable development on and around the airport. The primary ones the

## Meeting Minutes

project team has identified are significant development around the airport over the past 50 years – 1,720 parcels developed since 1964 within two miles of project, continued urban development expected especially west of the airport, and Manning Ave. expansion from two to four lanes. All of these things have a cumulative effect over time that needs to be represented and disclosed in the environmental document.

Evan then directed the audience to the table in the back of the presentation handout summarizing the environmental effects. The items in green are the categories for which the project team has definitively identified the effects/impacts AND any required permitting, mitigation and/or associated actions. The project team is still evaluating the categories in white – he said 75-80 percent of the analysis on those has already been completed but the project team is coordinating with various government agencies and determining any voluntary mitigation that the MAC may want to undertake. For these categories, there may be additional information included in the final environmental document that is not represented here, but, in general, this table gives a good overview of the team's findings of the effects that will be in the document.

Evan then covered next steps: He mentioned the project team has met with the Community Engagement Panel (CEP) four times over the past year and will be meeting next with the CEP on January 16<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, the project team will give the CEP a final overview of what will be in the environmental document. The team will then publish that document shortly thereafter for public review and comment. Approximately a month after the publication of the draft for review, the project team will hold a public hearing. Anyone from the interested public can submit written comments at any time during the comment period or submit oral statements for the record at the public hearing. Those statements will be included in the final environmental document and addressed/responded to. At the end of the process, a final federal Environmental Assessment (EA)/state Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) will be issued. The FAA makes the finding on the EA and the MAC on the EAW.

Evan closed by saying this is the process we've been going through for the past year and there are a couple more months to go. He thanked everyone for their participation in the process as well as for attending tonight's meeting and said he looked forward to questions during the Q&A session.

Todd then reiterated that this public process is still ongoing with further opportunities for public review and comment during the review period and public hearing. He opened the Q&A session and informed the audience that a staff member would be walking around with a microphone for people to use when asking their questions so all can hear. He requested that those asking questions state their name and city/township and keep questions or comments to two minutes each so that the panel could get through everyone's questions.

**The presentation Question & Answer session that followed is described below.** *(Responses are indicated in italics.)*

- Dave Schultz, West Lakeland Township Supervisor & CEP member. I have some concerns here. I'll rattle them all off and you can address them how you'd like. You spoke about tree removal and bats and that they wouldn't be affected. I'm not sure that's exactly true. Yes, you're going to take the trees out while the bats are in hibernation in caves, but when they come back the trees are gone and that will technically affect them. At a previous meeting, you had made a reference about the number of aircraft at the 60% capacity or load level and I'd asked how many

of those planes are based out here today. Is there one plane or are there six or 16? I'm still waiting to find out how many aircraft here today are at 60% capacity before they can take off, where they can't be at 95%. Where in your process are you going to visit the Valley Branch Watershed? I know you have it in your plan that you're going to do it; I attended a meeting last week at Valley Branch and they were not aware of what you're proposing. You may have talked to the Barr Engineering engineer representing Valley Branch but the Valley Branch managers were not aware of any of this. One resident made a comment to me that these are wants—these aren't needs. If they want something, maybe they shouldn't be based here. You spoke about soil types. Have you done any borings? Do you know what soils are below the first couple feet of ground? Might want to look at that. There was a comment about RPZs here in the past and I got curious and I went and looked at MSP and from the map I was able to determine it looks like 494 goes through the RPZ for 17/35. Is that true? How do you mitigate water at a 2:1 ratio in some other part of the township/county/state? You may mitigate it, but that doesn't handle the water. I also have a concern if you're supposed to take and, if I'm correct, keep 1.1 inches of rainfall on MAC property during a rain event, how is this addressed in the winter months when the ground is frozen? Last year at Christmastime we had a 1" rainfall and so I was curious how this would be addressed? *Evan Barrett started with the tree removal and bats question, with Dave's point being that the trees would not be there when the bats returned. He noted that Dave had a point there. Evan then said he should have mentioned this at the beginning of his remarks, is that these significance levels and factors – in some cases there's a significance threshold the FAA has identified for certain categories. For example: noise. It's a very hard line, quantitative threshold: 65 DNL sound level. In the case of the northern long-eared bat and tree removal, while there are still technical factors to consider, there isn't a hard line in terms of how they define significance. The FAA has to make a determination—for any species that may be affected—on the likelihood of any significant effect. The FAA coordinates with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to make sure that the USFWS agrees with the FAA that there is no significant effect. The FAA has submitted that determination to USFWS and USFWS' concurrence will be in the final environmental document. Evan then said he'd focus on Dave's environmental-related questions and suggested they follow-up on the others afterward. Evan said he was disappointed to hear Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD) wasn't aware of the proposed improvements. He said the project team has been working closely with VBWD's engineer and also with Washington County Soil & Water and other similar agencies like Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources. The team had soil scientists from all three of these entities out in the field with the project team a few weeks ago to take a look at the wetlands the project team has delineated. He expects that at the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting the Board will concur with the wetland boundaries the team has identified. Evan said if there are certain people from the VBWD that aren't aware of the project, he'd be happy to speak with them and bring them up to speed, but the team has been working closely with VBWD. Regarding soil types, Evan said the team has not done any soil borings as part of this project but has looked at available soil data the USDA makes available, as the project team had to make a determination on whether or not areas that would be affected by the proposed project constitute prime farmland and that's dependent on the type of soil out there. He said Mead & Hunt's engineers have looked at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street realignment, which is the area he believes has been brought up as an area of concern in terms of soil types, and they believe the geotechnical conditions are such that there's not going to be any issues as far as the soils. Regarding the question on replacement of the wetlands at a*

*2:1 ratio, Evan said that in the case of airports, wetlands are considered wildlife attractants. So while ideally you would replace a wetland right next to the wetland you're impacting, from an airport perspective, that's not the best option, because it's not as safe. He noted it is common for projects like this – not only for airport projects but also highway projects and other projects – to purchase credits from wetland banks that restore or create new wetlands elsewhere to replace the function of that wetland. He said it does not alter the fact that if you're taking away that wetland, you're taking away potentially an area that's holding water during high-storm events. You mentioned the 1.1" requirement that the VBWD has and the team is considering that very closely in the design of this project. If the project can't meet that standard, the project won't be permitted. So, the MAC must meet that standard – there's really no way around it.*

- Norm Jones, resident of West Lakeland Township (mentioned this was his first meeting). Six months ago, I started learning to fly, and was shocked to do the math and figure out that if I wanted to put my whole family in the plane—which was the plan—on a hot summer day, and expect to live, that wouldn't a good idea on our short runway. So thank you for doing this. I've had a discussion with a neighbor or two who wasn't a pilot and he was wondering, "why do we need to do this," but I explained that if your road engineer tells you that you need a stoplight instead of a stop sign because your road now needs to be safer, you don't argue with the road engineer: it's safer. My question is will all the runway length be usable or will there be a displaced threshold, backing off some? If there is a displaced threshold, is it too late to add more length to compensate for that? *Neil Ralston, MAC Airport Planner, responded that the full 3,500 feet on replacement Runway 14/32 will be usable pavement – no displaced threshold.*
- Mike Wilhelmi, Resident of Stillwater. With respect to the ponding that was built for the Easton development for their runoff, that development is somewhat new and I don't know how long the plans were in place or if they ran them past you before they went forward, but is there any concern about birds being at the ponds and then flying through your RPZ? *Evan Barrett responded that wildlife attractants are hazardous at airports and there are certain measures airports can take to discourage wildlife, so the team will have some recommendations on measures that can be taken not only in the new development but also in areas on the airport that may attract waterfowl and other types of wildlife. The FAA has a standard that within 48 hours of a rainfall or significant precipitation event, that any storm water detention facilities be designed to drain in that timeframe. Neil Ralston then added that, regarding Easton Village and the corresponding Village Park Preserve development that will be going in south of Easton Village, the MAC did review those plans and had significant comments on the storm water retention. The MAC worked with USDA Department of Wildlife to give the designers some recommendations on how to minimize the attractiveness of those ponds to waterfowl – largely making them narrow and deep, and they also asked that the developer not plant lawns along the back side of the pond but have it be native grasses that are less attractive to the waterfowl. He then said, yes, in an ideal world we wouldn't have retention ponds across the street from the airport but that being said, we did work with them to minimize the attractiveness of those ponds—by design—to waterfowl. He then pointed out that the runway being proposed moves further away from those ponds than the existing runway is today.*
- Molly Olson, resident of West Lakeland Township. I'm a pretty new resident; not happy about this. Can you refresh my memory about the mission statement and goal you have created for the CEP? *Dana Nelson thanked Molly for her question and responded that, as part of this process, the MAC wanted to make a concerted effort to create a plan that was intended to reach*

out to a wide variety of stakeholders, so the team put together the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Part of that was convening a Community Engagement Panel (CEP). The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) set forth the CEP membership and who the team reached out to incorporate into that panel. It included community leaders who were part of the long-term comprehensive planning process, Washington County, airport users who were part of the planning process as well, a couple MAC staff members, Stillwater Chamber of Commerce, and the MAC Commissioner who represents that area. She said there is a lot of description on what the CEP was intended to do in that Stakeholder Engagement Plan, which is available on the project website. Dana said she'd be happy to provide a copy to anyone interested in it. She said there isn't a specific objective of the CEP laid out in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and noted this is the first time the MAC has convened a CEP and is learning throughout the process. She stated they would include an objective statement for future CEPs. She also offered that if the CEP would like to discuss this during their next meeting, it could be added to the discussion agenda. Molly said, I'm asking the question because it seems to me it's being portrayed as "oh look at us, we're engaging the public and we are interested in what they have to say," but the few I've attended seem to be talking at the people, and not really trying to arrive at clear solutions that will achieve win-win solutions for the hobbyists at the airport, the MAC and their desire to spend money vs. the impact of the community. The second question I have is on this big spreadsheet here which, as I understood it, this is an outline of what will be provided to the federal government to get your final approvals in your report – is that right? If I understood that right—that this is everything that's going to be in your report—I'm wondering where in here has anything to do with how the people feel about this and the impact that the people that live around it feel? It doesn't look like that's included in here. Evan Barrett responded that the table is a summary table of the environmental analysis categories that the project team is required to look at under the National Environmental Policy Act and what their findings are going to be. He said that's going to be supported by a lot of detailed information—and he acknowledged he rushed to get through a lot of information in a short period of time here this evening—but said the team's intent in providing this information in this forum is to provide that overview so that when members of the public go to look at the draft document that is published early next year, that it's not going to be as difficult to process or find what you're looking for. He said that part of the intent of this whole stakeholder engagement process is to provide that baseline of understanding of what the project team is doing, but also to listen and make sure they understand what the concerns of the community are. He stated there's no requirement under the National Environmental Policy Act to do this stakeholder outreach process; this is something the MAC chose to do because they believed it was important based on what they'd found during their previous planning efforts. It was an important goal for the MAC to implement a process like this that allowed for these sorts of questions, comments and dialogue. Chad Leque then added, on the topic of community concerns and what the team has heard throughout the dialogue, he'd started the meeting with the list of topics, and acknowledged that Molly was the one who brought that idea up at the last CEP meeting. He said, "You've been a passionate advocate for making sure we have a process that really listens and isn't talking at people, and you've been consistent in your advocacy for that and attending meetings and maintaining a keen eye toward that concept. We are trying. As Dana said, we're doing some things that are new for MAC staff, and admittedly, there's some learning that's occurring along the way and I would characterize your thoughts and ideas at the last meeting as a learning for us on some of the things that would

*be effective and helpful in communicating and engaging with the public.” He thanked her for that. He also said the process is designed to give answers to the questions that people have, and the team is trying to do that in a few different ways – FAQs on the website, for example. As he mentioned at the beginning of the presentation tonight, there is a formal component of this environmental review process that is focused on the public’s comments. Any member of the public can submit a written comment or testify at the public hearing for the document. That testimony and those written comments will be included in the record that will be before the respective organizations that need to make a determination on the final environmental documents. He referenced what Evan Barrett had stated earlier, that those organizations are the FAA on the federal side (under NEPA) and the Metropolitan Airports Commission on the state side (under MEPA). He said the project team is making an effort to do more than the bare minimum, which per federal NEPA requirements is just doing the public comment period. He said the team is trying to take and respond to comments as best it can throughout the process, and, when possible, try to address some of those issues and concerns as part of the planning process. He reiterated, “We’re not done yet in terms of formal opportunities for comments and responses to questions. That’s still an important part of the planning process that lies before us before any determination is made on these documents.”*

- Mike Wilhelmi, Resident of Stillwater. I have a question about the grant process you’re following and the program that you’re going to use to get the funding to execute the project. I know there are some fairly strong constraints about how the program must be designed in order to draw down that FAA funding, and I think we’d talked about this at a previous meeting, about asking for a waiver of where the RPZs would be – if it could be that the MAC and the community got together and said, with the space that we have, it’s going to be hard for us to have the length we think is necessary for the flying public, would it be possible for you to ask the FAA for a waiver to allow the RPZ to be over the railroad tracks or over 30<sup>th</sup> Street? *Chad Leque responded that the team has engaged the FAA on that topic because it’s the catalyst for the whole discussion on the rerouting of 30<sup>th</sup> Street. As part of the CEP efforts, Chad reached out to the FAA again to ask if there are any options that would lessen the need for some of the rerouting being considered as part of the project. The position received from the FAA was “no.” He said they stood firm on that. He reported that some of this dialogue took place back when the team was evaluating other options for the design of the 30<sup>th</sup> Street reroute, focusing at that time primarily on travel time because there was a concern on safety services and increased travel time with the realignment of 30<sup>th</sup>. He noted the team also engaged the FAA on that topic following the last public meeting when this question was brought up, just to reconfirm their position on this issue. Mike said he just wanted to confirm they’d asked more than once. Chad confirmed that they had.*

With no further questions, Todd Streeter then closed the Q&A and encouraged community members to meet with the project team and continue the dialogue in the one-on-one engagement session.

The Q&A adjourned at approximately 7:25 p.m. The one-on-one engagement session ended at approximately 8:00 p.m.