The Environmental Process
With the LTCP complete, the MAC can now begin the environmental review process.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is used by the federal government to determine whether proposed projects—in this case the Lake Elmo Airport airfield improvements project—will have significant environmental effects. In order to qualify for federal funding, the Lake Elmo Airport improvements project must undergo a NEPA review.

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) adopted a Long-Term Comprehensive Plan (LTCP) for Lake Elmo Airport. The LTCP provides guidance and a roadmap for possible airfield improvements over the next 20 years. Specifically, the LTCP proposes the following improvements:

- Relocate and extend Runway 14/32 to 3,500 feet
- Realign 30th Street North around the relocated runway protection zone
- Construct new taxiways
- Convert the existing runway to a parallel taxiway
- Reconstruct and extend crosswind Runway 4/22 to 2,750 feet
- Upgrade instrument approaches to use newer technology

However, before these improvements can be made, the MAC needs to study the possible environmental effects associated with them.

Information developed for and presented in the LTCP provides the basis for the environmental review.
The NEPA process covers 14 environmental categories that include related social and economic effects. The categories include:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources (including fish, wildlife, and plants)
- Climate
- Coastal Resources
- Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)
- Farmlands
- Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention
- Historic, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Natural Resources and Energy Supply
- Noise and Compatible Land Use

Based on the nature of the proposed improvements, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) — the responsible federal agency in this case — has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) is required. An EA addresses the purpose and need of the project by considering a range of alternatives. It then determines whether or not the proposed alternative has the potential to cause significant environmental effects compared to a no-action (status quo) alternative.

If the FAA finds that the project would have no significant environmental impacts, the NEPA process is concluded and the project is eligible for federal funding. After completing the NEPA process, the decision to move forward with the project is made at the local level.

The Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and related Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) guidelines also require project proposers to complete environmental reviews for various types of projects. To meet state requirements, an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required for the Lake Elmo Airport airfield improvements because it includes construction of a new paved runway. As such, the MAC will complete the state EAW requirements simultaneously with the Federal EA.

The MAC has begun the EA/EAW process, which will involve extensive public outreach and opportunities for public involvement. If the FAA finds that the project would have no significant environmental impacts, the NEPA process is concluded and the project is eligible for federal funding. After completing the NEPA process, the decision to move forward with the project is made at the local level.

Community Engagement Panel (CEP)

Environmental review projects always benefit from the participation of a range of stakeholders. Stakeholders for this project include affected cities, townships, and counties, businesses, airport users, and, of course, members of the community.

To facilitate stakeholder engagement and participation, the Metropolitan Airports Commission has established a Community Engagement Panel (CEP). This panel, representing major community stakeholders, will serve in an advisory role. The CEP members serve several functions, including receiving and then sharing information about the environmental process with their individual constituencies; providing input to the process as the voice of key stakeholders; and, in some cases, providing technical advice to the MAC’s consultant team.

The Lake Elmo Airport CEP is composed of representatives from the following organizations/stakeholder groups:

- City of Lake Elmo
- Washington County
- Mac staff
- Community engagement panel (CEP)
- Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce
- Mac commissioner
- Airport tenants/users
- Baytown Township
- West Lakeland
- Allina health

The first CEP meeting occurred in February, with six more to follow. To learn more about how you can share your thoughts and ideas during this process, visit the project website at www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment.aspx.

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The MAC has begun the EA/EAW process, which will involve extensive public outreach and opportunities for public involvement. More specific project information is provided on the project website at www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment.aspx.

For more detail, see the Stakeholder Engagement Plan on the project website. Schedule is subject to change. Any significant schedule updates will be published on the project website and distributed to e-news subscribers, as appropriate.
Stay Involved

The best way to keep current on what’s happening with the project is to sign up to receive updates via our e-news subscription program. Go to the project website to sign up.

Regular updates will be sent to this email list, including notices about public events. You can also find up-to-date information such as public event details, public project documents (reports, newsletters, presentations, fact sheets, etc.), answers to frequently asked questions, and information on how to provide public comment on the project website.

Project website: [www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment.aspx](http://www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment.aspx)

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Community Event

Thursday, May 11, 2017
6:00 to 8:00 p.m. (Presentation at 6:30)
Stillwater Area High School
2nd Floor Rotunda & Forum Room
5701 Stillwater Blvd N.
Stillwater, MN 55082

We want your input! The MAC is committed to a transparent and open community involvement process. The purpose of this first community event is to provide information and to give community members an opportunity to ask questions.

When arriving at Stillwater Area High School, please park in the main lot and enter through the Administration entrance in the middle of the front plaza. There will be a presentation at 6:30 p.m. where community members can learn more about the proposed project, the NEPA and MEPA processes, environmental analysis categories, how and why alternatives are considered, the anticipated project timeline and opportunities for public input. The event is open to the public and all interested parties are encouraged to attend.