



CRYSTAL AIRPORT FEDERAL EA / STATE EAW

Airport Public Meeting Minutes

Crystal Community Center Game Room

October 30, 2018

6:00 P.M. Open house with informational boards

6:30 P.M. Presentation followed by Q&A

MAC/Mead & Hunt Attendees

Dana Nelson

Neil Ralston

Bridget Rief

Gary Schmidt

Melissa Scovronski

Brad Juffer

Naomi Pesky

Phillip Tiedeman

Katie Clark-Sieben

Evan Barrett

Sarah Emmel

Representing

Metropolitan Airports Commission

Crystal Airport Manager, Metropolitan Airports Commission

MAC Commissioner District C

Mead & Hunt

Mead & Hunt

Presentation slides and informational boards presented at this meeting provided as handouts to the public, as well as a project newsletter, are available on the project website at:

<https://www.metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Crystal-Airport-Environmental-Assessment/Documents-and-Links.aspx>

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide background on the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), previous Crystal Airport planning efforts, and an overview of the federal environmental assessment (EA) / state environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) process.
- Introduce the EA/EAW Purpose & Need, Alternatives, and completed portions of the Environmental Consequences chapters to the public.
- Respond to inquiries from community members.

Items discussed in the formal presentation at 6:30pm were as follows:

Neil Ralston, Airport Planner with the MAC, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. He noted that the purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the current environmental assessment study that is underway. The environmental review process is the next step in implementing the recent long term comprehensive plan (LTCP). Introductions were made for MAC and Mead & Hunt staff.

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Neil provided an overview of the MAC, its history and mission, and the place of Crystal Airport within the larger metropolitan airport system. He emphasized that the MAC is its own legal entity, not part of the state, city, or Metropolitan Council. Capital improvements at MAC airports are funded by aviation users through FAA and/or state aviation grant programs, along with MAC generated funds. No local sales or property taxes are used for improvements at MAC airports.

The environmental review process allows the MAC to reengage with the public and Airport users that were involved during the LTCP, and to reach out for new voices. Neil highlighted the project website that relates specifically to the environmental review, the email update subscription, and the newsletter that was mailed to Airport neighbors.

Neil provided an overview of the Airport Community Panel (ACP), a ten member advisory body made up of representatives of different local stakeholders. This includes the three municipalities adjacent to the Airport (Crystal, Brooklyn Park, and Brooklyn Center), Airport users, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, Hennepin County, citizens, and the MAC. The members have important functions, such as representing a broad range of stakeholder groups, receiving information about the environmental review process and sharing it with their constituents, and providing input back into the process. The first meeting of the ACP took place on August 28. Materials from this meeting are available on the project website. The next ACP meeting will occur in early 2019 and members of the public are welcome to attend.

Evan Barrett from Mead & Hunt noted that there will be a question and answer session after the presentation, and suggested attendees keep questions in mind to ask at that time. He also noted that the slides and the handouts included the same information in case anyone could not see the screen.

Evan explained the anticipated project timeline, which picks up after the completion of the LTCP. The environmental assessment process began in early 2018 and has been underway ever since. The ACP event occurred in August, which brings the process to today's public event. Looking forward, the remaining environmental studies and analysis will be finished, and a draft document will be completed. This draft will be published on the project website and will be available in some physical locations in early 2019. At that time, there will be an opportunity for comments on the record at a public hearing and through written comments during a comment period.

Evan provided an overview of the regulations governing the environmental review process. Environmental review is mandated at the federal and state level by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). He explained that the federal and state requirements will be addressed within a single combined EA/EAW document.

Evan explained that the role of Crystal Airport is to accommodate small aircraft with less than 10 passenger seats traveling to and from this part of the metro area. The project goals grew out of the previous LTCP that revealed the need to modernize and right-size the Airport, which hasn't had significant changes in decades. Updates should also maintain the Airport's operational capabilities and enhance safety. Project objectives include simplifying the airfield; providing more runway length; adding enhanced approach procedures; adding perimeter roads to enhance safety by limiting the need for vehicles to cross runways; adding aircraft parking on an expanded fixed base operator (FBO) apron; and designating some property not needed for Airport operations for non-aeronautical use to enhance MAC revenue streams at the Airport.

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Evan explained the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has identified areas of increased likelihood of confusion, incidents, and accidents at the Airport. The FAA calls these areas hot spots. In Crystal's case, the hot spots are related to closely spaced runways. Closing several taxiway connections to the runway, closing the parallel runway, and building perimeter roads so vehicles do not have to cross the runways would help to eliminate these hot spots and simplify the airfield.

Evan explained the concept of "design aircraft" for the primary runway and went over the runway length needs chart shown in the slides and on the boards. This shows the existing and proposed runway length and the design aircraft runway length requirements. The design aircraft is not changing, but the proposed plan would better accommodate the needs of the existing family of aircraft. The chart also illustrates that larger jet aircraft have runway length needs beyond that proposed for Crystal Airport and are unlikely to use the Airport on a regular basis.

Next, Evan discussed the turf crosswind runway. The recent LTCP process initially proposed closing this runway. Ultimately, through stakeholder engagement, a plan to keep the runway in place while reducing its length by approximately 500 feet was developed. The proposed changes would remove taxiways from the turf runway safety areas, eliminating additional hot spots.

Evan then noted that NEPA and MEPA implementing guidance identify specific environmental categories that must be analyzed during the environmental review process. Some of them are more applicable in this situation than others. FAA and state guidance are used to look at each category. Evan then discussed environmental issues for each category specific to the EA/EAW being developed for the proposed project at Crystal Airport.

Noise and compatible land use: The proposed project would change aircraft noise patterns surrounding the Airport, but these changes would be minor. The changes are due to closing one runway and redirecting its traffic to the other. The primary runway would be slightly longer, and runway ends would be in slightly different locations and centered on Airport property to more evenly distribute noise. A detailed study of areas with potential noise impacts is in progress as part of the review. To reduce noise, the MAC has a voluntary noise abatement plan that it encourages aircraft users to follow, and the MAC maintains a noise complaint hotline for reporting any issues.

Climate: A greenhouse gas emissions inventory model will be developed to review the difference between the no-action scenario and the proposed project.

Tree removal: Imaginary surfaces that come off the ends of runways need to be cleared of obstacles for the safety of aircraft arrivals and departures. The MAC needs to apply and follow FAA criteria to determine which trees need to be removed to provide clear surfaces. Areas have been identified for further study for individual tree removal or trimming. Some of the affected trees are in a public park (Edgewood Park in Brooklyn Park), and therefore require an extra level of scrutiny under the federal Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f). Under this regulation, any impacts to the park need to be mitigated, or a study needs to be done to show no adverse effects would result from the proposed project. The MAC is collaborating with the City of Brooklyn Park and the FAA regarding this issue.

Air Quality: An emissions inventory model will be developed to review the difference between the no-action scenario and the proposed project .

Natural resources and energy supply: Quantification of construction materials and energy needs will be completed as part of the review.

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Protected species: The MAC is coordinating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to confirm no protected species would be impacted. No protected species have been found at Crystal Airport.

Visual effects: The proposed project would result in minor changes to airfield lighting systems. Some lights would move, and there would be some new lights. The environmental document will examine what that means in terms of visual effects to nearby land uses.

Land use: The airport zoning ordinance enacted in 1983 would need to be updated due to the changes to the runway ends. This effort would take place after the EA/EAW is complete, but the EA/EAW will examine its effects.

Historic, archeological, and cultural resources: A detailed study has been completed and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office. The project would not affect any of these resources.

Hazardous materials: There are potential sources of contamination on and around the Airport, so the EA/EAW will document these sites to make sure that they are not disturbed during construction.

Water resource: A wetland delineation was completed, and a storm water analysis will be completed to make sure there is no increase in runoff from Airport property into surrounding areas. This is a requirement of one of the permits that must be obtained prior to construction.

Evan then went over next steps, including the second ACP meeting, FAA legal review, publication of the draft EA/EAW document, a public comment period, and the public hearing, which will be held in early 2019.

Evan asked for questions from attendees.

Items discussed in the question and answer session were as follows:

An attendee asked about the hours of operation once the project is completed. Evan noted that the Airport is open 24 hours per day, and Neil provided the hours that the tower is staffed. The proposed project would not affect the hours of operation. Evan clarified that most of the activity occurs at the Airport during the day; the noise study indicated that only approximately four percent of activity occurs at night.

An attendee asked which park is affected by potential tree removal. This is Edgewood Park, at the corner of 63rd and Florida. Neil clarified that not all trees would be removed; it would only be large cottonwoods. Evan explained that the surfaces that must be cleared in this location are high up in this location, and while there are other species of trees in the park, only the cottonwoods are growing high enough to be a concern.

An attendee asked how to stay informed about the process prior to the spring hearing. There will be periodic e-news updates to the subscription list. These will be on at least a monthly basis. The project website also has a “contact project team” option for any questions or comments. Neil agreed that the e-news subscription will be the best way to stay up to date. The attendee asked if there was any particular person to contact. Neil directed people to use the “contact project team” option on the website to reach the necessary people.

An attendee asked to clarify whether the tree removal in the park a block away is due to the runway lengthening, as it seems quite far away to have an effect on park vegetation. He commented that Airport expansion should remain within the existing Airport boundaries. He asked if aircraft would fly

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that low in this area. Neil noted that the cottonwoods in this particular area get quite tall. He also explained that most of the trees affected by the proposed project would grow into the existing height limitations within a few years in the no-action scenario. By moving the runway end and associated imaginary surface a little closer to the park, these trees would have to come down sooner than they would without the project. The trees would ultimately be an issue with or without the project. The attendee asked if the MAC has trimmed in the park before. Neil did not believe so. The attendee thought that it sounded then that the removal or trimming was due to the runway lengthening. Neil reiterated that the timing of the tree removal is related to the project, but as the trees grow they will become an issue with the runway in its current location partially due to the tendency of the species to grow taller than most other trees in the park.

Cindy Sherman from Brooklyn Park noted that the Brooklyn Park zoning map already shows an area of impact of the Airport, and the trees are within that designated area. Evan clarified with a graphic that the park is directly off the extended centerline of the runway, and under the threshold siting surface (TSS), which the FAA requires to be cleared. FAA enforcement of this surface has become more stringent in recent years to promote safety at airports. The FAA is aware of potential concerns with the park and wants to work with the city to come up with a solution that could ultimately improve the park in combination with tree removal. Neil noted that the TSS has a 20:1 slope from the ground at the runway end.

An attendee explained that the reason she came to the meeting was due to the potential for tree removal in the park, as it is the only wild area nearby. She lives kitty-corner from the park. She has concerns that if the park is “improved,” duck and bird habitat will be destroyed. If some trees are removed, it is hard to make sure that trees next to them are not also damaged, so there will likely be non-cottonwoods affected. She is concerned that the community will lose the forest habitat, which is rare in this area. The speaker also asked whether cottonwoods in surrounding yards would also require removal if the trees in the park are too tall. Evan explained that an arborist went out to look at the trees in potentially affected areas and prepared a detailed report of species found there. Evan explained that the report showed very few cottonwoods in the neighborhoods, which have mostly red maple and other tree species. Cottonwoods are concentrated in the park due to Twin Creek and wetlands in the park, which are attractive growing areas for cottonwoods. There are not wetlands on properties outside of the park, meaning that conditions are not right for the trees elsewhere. In addition, most people do not purposely plant cottonwoods in their yards, so it is less likely to affect trees in lawns. Neil reiterated that the MAC will be working with the City to end up with a positive effect in the park.

The commenter also noted that she heard that the Airport may be growing, and asked whether there are plans to expand the Airport outside of the footprint within twenty years. Neil explained that the current steps correspond with the twenty-year plan, so there are no plans to increase the size of the Airport beyond the current proposed action. The MAC is trying to modernize and optimize the Airport, rather than expand it.

An attendee brought up the runway shift to the northwest, and asked for clarification about where the current and future runway ends are on the graphic. Neil noted that the runway would shift 115 feet northwest along its centerline. Evan pointed out the current and projected runway ends. Neil clarified that there is already pavement in the form of the existing blast pads where the ends of the runway would ultimately be.

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An attendee asked about a culvert at 61st and Douglas Drive, and noted that it doesn't drain well. He asked if the project would improve drainage or make it worse. Evan explained that there would need to be new stormwater containment or infiltration on-site in order to make sure there is not increased runoff from the site. This is a requirement of an MPCA permit that the MAC has to get in order to construct the project. The EA/EAW will document where stormwater facilities are being removed, and where they might be replaced. This would be finalized in the design phase, and is just conceptual at this stage. There is a requirement to keep stormwater on-site, so the project would not make the problem any worse.

Neil confirmed there were no more questions, thanked attendees for coming, and invited them to the next meeting.