

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Southwest Region

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
And  
RECORD OF DECISION**

Runway 17/35 Activation  
Northwest Arkansas National Airport  
Bentonville, AR

May 14, 2020

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this Finding of No Significant Impact and Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) is to briefly present the reasons why the approval of Federal actions supporting the proposed activation of Runway 17/35 at Northwest Arkansas National Airport, which serves the city of Bentonville, Arkansas will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The Northwest Arkansas National Airport Authority, the owner of the airport requested FAA's approval of a revised Airport Layout Plan showing the change in pavement markings and signage required to convert the existing taxiway to a runway as required for the ultimate runway naming convention.

Attached to this FONSI/ROD is the environmental assessment (EA) on which the finding is made.

**II. SUMMARY**

The EA was prepared pursuant to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508). Additionally, the EA meets the guidelines identified in FAA Orders 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*.

No thresholds of significance were found to be exceeded in the EA. After review of the EA and other supporting documentation, the FAA determined that a FONSI/ROD was justified for the proposed airport improvements.

The EA was released for public and agency review with local citizens encouraged to provide comments. Notice of availability of the EA and an opportunity to request a public hearing was advertised in the local paper. No comments were received and no one requested a public hearing.

### **III. PURPOSE AND NEED**

#### **A. Need for the Proposed Project:**

The need for the proposed action is described in the EA on pages 5 to 7. The need is supported based on Northwest Arkansas National Airport's role within the *National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems* (NPIAS) as an air carrier airport. Northwest Arkansas National Airport's designation as an air carrier airport translates to the airport's level of importance within the national aviation system. Forecasts and facility requirements contained within the NPIAS assume that the airport will continue to fulfill its role within the national aviation system. In order to allow Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport to continue to fulfill its assigned role, it needs to be able to accommodate the requirements of the air carriers and all other aircraft operating out of the airport by providing a safe operating environment. To help do that, the airport needs to provide continuous operations for arrivals and departures during emergencies, maintenance, or when disabled aircraft cause temporary closure of Runway 16-34, the only runway present at Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport.

#### **B. Purpose of the proposed project:**

The proposed solution to the problem is to mark and sign the existing taxiway running parallel to Runway 16-34 to become Runway 17-35 and activate it as such.

### **IV. ALTERNATIVES**

The FAA explored and objectively evaluated reasonable alternatives that were considered practical and feasible in meeting the purpose and need.

Chapter 2 of the EA describes the alternatives considered to meet the airport's purpose and need.

Two alternatives were proposed in the EA. These consisted of the Proposed Action, including redesignating the existing taxiway as Runway 17-35 and publishing its status as an active runway and the No Action Alternative.

A detailed explanation of each alternative is provided in EA and will not be repeated herein. Note that the No Action Alternative is always required to be analyzed in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 CFR § 1502.14. A short description of the three alternatives and their advantages and disadvantages follows:

The FAA has determined in this FONSI/ROD, that the Proposed Action, is the FAA's preferred and selected alternative. In arriving at this decision, the FAA considered all pertinent factors, including the environmental impacts as well as the FAA statutory

charter in the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended, to encourage and foster the development of civil aeronautics (49 U.S.C. § 40101).

## **V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **A. Potential Impact Resource Categories**

Noise was determined to be the only impact resource category with the potential to be impacted by implementation of the Proposed Action.

The potential for noise impacts as a result of the proposed action and alternatives was analyzed in the subject environmental assessment.

The FAA's criteria for evaluating the impact of "noise energy exposure" is expressed in terms of yearly day/night average sound level (DNL). The threshold of significance for purposes of determining whether a proposed action will cause significant noise impacts is set forth in FAA Order 1050.1E. A "significant noise impact" is defined as a 1.5 decibel (or greater) increase within the 65 DNL contour over any noise sensitive area when compared to the "no action" alternative. Applying the above criteria, the environmental study modeled potential noise level increases for years 2040.

This study found that there were no areas of an increase of 1.5 decibel (or greater) within the 65 DNL noise exposure contour resulting from the proposed action for 2040 conditions and, thus, no significant noise impacts. No mitigation efforts are required.

### **B. Resource Impact categories Unaffected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives**

The other 19 environmental resources identified in FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B were determined not be impacted by the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternatives and were therefore not described in detail in the EA. Examples of these resources include, but are not limited to, air quality, biological resources, farmlands, cultural resources, wetlands, floodplains and groundwater.

## **VI. DECISION CONSIDERATIONS AND ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

Throughout the development of the airport, including the proposed improvements described in Part III above, the FAA has made every effort to adhere to the policies and purposes of NEPA, as stated in CEQ Regulations for Implementing NEPA, 40 CFR § 1500-1508. The FAA has concentrated on the truly significant issues related to the action in question. In its determination whether to prepare an EIS or process the EA as a FONSI/ROD, the FAA weighed the following considerations:

In accordance with 40 CFR § 1507.3 and 1501.4, FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B, represent Agency procedures to supplement the CEQ Regulations for airport development projects.

After examination of the EA as well as all other evidence available to the FAA, the FAA has determined the available record demonstrated that no thresholds indicating the potential for significant impact were exceeded and an EIS is not required. In addition, the FAA determined that existing evidence available to the agency clearly points to the proposed project as beneficial in fulfilling the FAA's statutory mission of promoting a safe and efficient nationwide airport system, and further study of the issues in an EIS will result only in "amassing needless detail." As the nation's aviation agency, the FAA has the ultimate technical expertise to develop, evaluate, and select actions and alternatives that would result in safe and efficient use of U.S airspace as prescribed in 49 U.S.C. §40103(a). In accordance with 49 U.S.C. Section 44502(b), the FAA has determined that the proposed action is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce.

The EA has adequately provided the agency with the information it needs: (a) to make an informed, objective decision on the environmental effects, as well as other effects, of the proposed project; and (b) to take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The FAA weighed both the potential positive and negative consequences that this proposed action may have on the quality of the human environment. Further processing of this proposed action in an EIS would needlessly generate additional paperwork and a rehashing of issues, while simultaneously impeding the FAA from carrying out its mission and blocking a primary goal of NEPA -- that of fostering excellent action.

In summary, the FAA opts to use a finding of no significant impact based on its conclusions that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

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 EIS for this action.

RECOMMENDED  
FOR APPROVAL:

*Dean A. McMath*

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Regional Environmental Programs Manager

APPROVED:

*Glenn Boles*

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Manager, AR/OK Airports District Office

## **DECISION AND ORDER**

Runway 17/35 Activation  
Northwest Arkansas National Airport  
Bentonville, AR

May 14, 2020

The FAA recognizes its responsibilities under NEPA, CEQ regulations, and its own directives. Recognizing these responsibilities, the FAA has carefully considered the objectives of the proposed projects in relation to aeronautical and environmental factors at and around Northwest Arkansas National Airport. Based upon the above analysis, the FAA has determined that the Proposed Action meets the purpose and need of the proposed project and best implements necessary airfield modifications to meet FAA design standards.

Having carefully considered the aviation safety and operational objectives of the project, as well as being properly advised as to the anticipated environmental impacts of the proposal, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I find that the project is reasonably supported. I certify, as prescribed by 49 U.S.C. 44502, that the proposed project is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce.

Therefore, I direct the approval of the revised airport layout plan presented to the FAA by the Northwest Arkansas National Airport Authority showing the changes in marking and signage of the existing taxiway to Runway 17-35. This approval is to be taken under the authority of 49 U.S.C. 40104, 44701, 46110, 47101, and 47122. The approved action is specifically described in Part IV of this FONSI/ROD, and identified in the EA as the preferred alternative.

This decision constitutes an order of the Administrator reviewable in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 46110.

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Ignacio Flores  
Airports Division Director  
Southwest Region

### Right of Appeal

This order constitutes final agency action under 49 U.S.C. 46110. Any party to this proceeding having a substantial interest may appeal the order to the courts of appeals of the United States or the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upon petition, filed within 60 days after entry of this order.