

MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Hudson, Assistant County Administrator

From: Airport Exploratory Study Consultant Team

Subject: County Priorities, Initial Study Assumptions and Specific Alternatives

The Scope of Services for the Airport Exploratory Study requires the consultant team to provide the County and make available to the public the assumptions and priorities to be incorporated into the Airport Exploratory Study. In addition to the assumptions and priorities, we have listed below the specific options that the consultant team will consider for each of the three study alternatives (relocation, closure and downsizing).

Note that, although the consultant team is, of course, interested in community input on all matters related to the Exploratory Study, the consultant team will not be responding directly to any comments or commentors.

County Priorities: The County Commissioners have identified several issues that should be addressed in the Exploratory Study. The consultant team will ensure that the Exploratory Study provides as much information on these subjects as time and budget permit. These priorities are:

1. The effects of airport relocation on the existing urban service area boundaries, other aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, and growth and development within Martin County more generally.
2. The assessed value of properties that could be acquired for construction of a new airport.
3. The environmental impacts, including wetlands impacts in particular, of constructing and operating a new airport.
4. The range of value, in present dollars, that could be paid to the County in the event that the airport is relocated or closed for the Witham Field site.

Initial Study Assumptions: Critical to the success of the Exploratory Study is distinguishing those things that will be assumed for purposes of the study from those things that will be evaluated and analyzed. The consultant team has spent considerable time at the beginning of the Exploratory Study identifying initial study assumptions, recognizing that some assumptions may be revised and others added in the course of the Exploratory Study. The following assumptions are based upon information provided by the County and other interested parties and reflect the best professional judgment of the consultant team:

1. For purposes of analysis, a new airport would be virtually identical to Witham Field in its size, runway orientation, configuration, and level of operations.

2. The impacts of constructing and operating a new airport would vary among the three sites to be examined in the study; however, the cost to construct a new airport would be the same at each location.
3. With respect to the relocation alternative, Martin County would continue to operate Witham Field until a new airport is open but would adjust its capital improvement and noise mitigation programs to reflect eventual closure.
4. With respect to the relocation alternative, Martin County will close Witham Field once a new airport is open and market the property for sale for non-airport reuse.
5. In the event the airport is relocated or closed, the property would be redeveloped for a mix of industrial, commercial, residential and recreational uses compatible with surrounding properties and consistent with current and projected growth patterns in Martin County and the City of Stuart.
6. The FAA will not approve a request to close Witham Field if the County does not commit to construct a replacement facility.
7. Actions that are intended to limit noise and access at Witham Field may be subject to the procedural and substantive requirements of the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990. Whether or not subject to ANCA, actions to reduce or eliminate airfield facilities (e.g., shortening runways) will require FAA approval.
8. The direct economic impact of the three alternatives can be measured in terms of jobs, payroll and output; however, secondary and induced economic impacts cannot be estimated in light of time and budget constraints.

Study Alternatives: For each of the alternatives (relocation, closure and downsizing) the consultant team will consider two or three options. In the case of relocation, the consultants will examine three separate sites as possible locations for a new airport. In the case of closure, the consultants will examine one redevelopment scenario, including a mix of land uses consistent with Assumption # 5 above. In the case of downsizing, the consultants will examine options intended to reduce the level of airport operations below current levels and options that would impose controls on future growth. More specifically, the alternatives to be examined include the following:

1. Relocation¹
 - A. Indiantown Airport.
 - B. North County (along S.R. 609 adjacent to the Martin Correctional Institution).

¹ These sites were selected based upon information provided by the County and interested parties and screened by the consultants to determine whether there exists a “fatal flaw” that should eliminate the site from further consideration. The sites are intended to be illustrative of the range of issues and impacts associated with constructing a new airport. A more thorough site selection study likely would be required if the County decided to evaluate relocation further.

C. West Bridge Road (between Kanner Highway (SR 76) and the St. Lucie Waterway (C-44 Canal), south of Loop Road (CR76A) and north of Bridge Road extended west).

2. Closure

A. Immediate closure, with or without FAA approval

B. Long-term (e.g., 20 year) closure.

3. Downsizing

A. Options designed to reduce current operations.

B. Options designed to limit future growth.