

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs ■ MEPA Office

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 Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
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NPC

Notice of Project Change

The information requested on this form must be completed to begin MEPA Review of a NPC in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act and its implementing regulations (see 301 CMR 11.10(1)).

Project Name: New Bedford Airport Improvements		EOEA #: 10316	
Street: 1569 Airport Road			
Municipality: New Bedford		Watershed: Buzzards Bay	
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: N 4615669, E337107, Zone 19		Latitude: 41-40-34.11N Longitude: 70-57-24.99W	
Status of project construction: 0%complete			
Proponent: City of New Bedford, New Bedford Regional Airport Commission			
Street: 1569 Airport Road			
Municipality: New Bedford		State: MA	Zip Code: 02746
Name of Contact Person From Whom Copies of this NPC May Be Obtained: Lisa A. Standley, PhD.			
Firm/Agency: Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB)		Street: 101 Walnut Street, P.O. Box 9151	
Municipality: Watertown		State: MA	Zip Code: 02472
Phone: 617-924-1770		Fax: 617-923-2336	E-mail: lstandley@vhb.com

In 25 words or less, what is the project change?

The project has changed from an airport expansion to improving runway safety areas and providing necessary support facilities.

See full project change description beginning on page 3.

Date of ENF filing or publication in the Environmental Monitor: April 10, 1995

Was an EIR required? Yes No; if yes,
 was a Draft EIR filed? Yes (Date: February 23, 2005) No
 was a Final EIR filed? Yes (Date:) No
 was a Single EIR filed? Yes (Date:) No
 Have other NPCs been filed? Yes (Date(s): March 25, 2003 for taxiway project only) No

If this is a NPC solely for lapse of time (see 301 CMR 11.10(2)) proceed directly to "ATTACHMENTS & SIGNATURES" on page 4.

PERMITS / FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE / LAND TRANSFER

List or describe all new or modified state permits, financial assistance, or land transfers not previously reviewed:

Are you requesting a finding that this project change is insignificant? (see 301 CMR 11.10(6)) Yes No; if yes, attach justification.

Are you requesting that a Scope in a previously issued Certificate be rescinded? Yes No; if yes, attach the Certificate

Are you requesting a change to a Scope in a previously issued Certificate? Yes No; if yes, attach Certificate and describe the change you are requesting:

Summary of Project Size & Environmental Impacts	Previously reviewed	Net Change	Currently Proposed
<i>LAND</i>			
Total site acreage	846 acres	0	846 acres
Acres of land altered	194.18 acres	- 35.22 acres	158.96 acres
Acres of impervious area (added to Airport)	84.1 acres	- 68.6 acres	15.5 acres
Square feet of bordering vegetated wetlands alteration	31.61 acres	- 28.13 acres	3.48 acres
Square feet of other wetland alteration	3.05 acres	- 1.38 acres	1.67 acres
Acres of non-water dependent use of tidelands or waterways	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>STRUCTURES</i>			
Gross square footage (of new structures)	167,544 sq. ft. (GA development)	No terminal expansion	Less than 167,544 sq.ft.
Number of housing units	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum height (in feet)	Not specified	-	To be determined
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>			
Vehicle trips per day (2021)	1,264	-1,160	104
Parking spaces (New)	1,510 (1,360 garage plus 150 employee parking)	-1,420	Conceptual planning: 90 spaces
<i>WATER/WASTEWATER</i>			
Gallons/day (GPD) of water use	N/A	N/A	N/A
GPD water withdrawal	N/A	N/A	N/A
GPD wastewater generation/ treatment	N/A	N/A	N/A
Length of water/sewer mains (in miles)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Does the project change involve any new or modified:

1. conversion of public parkland or other Article 97 public natural resources to any purpose not in accordance with Article 97? Yes No

WILL NO LONGER REQUIRE ARTICLE 97 LAND CONVERSION

2. release of any conservation restriction, preservation restriction, agricultural preservation restriction, or watershed preservation restriction? Yes No

3. impacts on Estimated Habitat of Rare Species, Vernal Pools, Priority Sites of Rare Species, or Exemplary Natural Communities? Yes No

IMPACTS HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED

4. impact on any structure, site or district listed in the State Register of Historic Place or the inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth?

Yes No; if yes, does the project involve any demolition or destruction of any listed or inventoried historic or archaeological resources? Yes No

5. impact upon an Area of Critical Environmental Concern? Yes No
If you answered 'Yes' to any of these 5 questions, explain below:

Under the proposed project, impacts to habitat of rare species, vernal pools, and priority sites of rare species would be substantially reduced compared to the airport expansion alternative. The project proposes reducing the impact to coastal swamp amphipod habitat from 1.88 acres to 0.72 acres. Impacts to the four-toed salamander would remain the same (a change in the quality of habitat). The project will no longer require Article 97 conversion.

PROJECT CHANGE DESCRIPTION (attach additional pages as necessary). The project change description should include:

- (a) a brief description of the project as most recently reviewed – See Chapter 1
- (b) a description of material changes to the project as previously reviewed, - See Chapter 2,3
- (c) the significance of the proposed changes, with specific reference to the factors listed 301 CMR 11.10(6), and – See Chapter 4
- (d) measures that the project is taking to avoid damage to the environment or to minimize and mitigate unavoidable environmental impacts. If the change will involve modification of any previously issued Section 61 Finding, include a proposed modification of the Section 61 Finding (or it will be required in a Supplemental EIR). – See Chapter 5

The Preferred Alternative in the DEIS/DEIR (February 2005) was the Airport Improvement Alternative (AIA). The AIA proposed runway and taxiway extensions, airside facility and runway lighting improvements, and terminal and parking upgrades. Impacts were evaluated for three alternatives: the AIA, the Runway Standard Safety Alternative (RSSA), and the No-Action Alternative. The RSSA focused on safety area improvements only.

The purpose and need of the DEIS/DEIR was to develop the New Bedford Regional Airport to enhance the Southeastern Massachusetts region's aviation capacity, and to accommodate the long-term aviation demand in southeast Massachusetts for passenger traffic, corporate jet traffic, air cargo, and general aviation traffic over the next 20 years.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in its comment letter on the DEIS/DEIR (April 21, 2005) stated the purpose of the project did not meet the DEP's criteria of an

“overriding public interest” and therefore could not meet the requirements for granting a variance under the Wetlands Protection Act or Water Quality Certification regulations.

Based on the comments received during the public review of the DEIS/DEIR and the CWA Section 404 Permit, the City of New Bedford determined that the environmental impacts of the AIA outweighed the benefit to aviation, and therefore decided to move forward only with alternatives that address the safety deficiencies of the Airport. The FAA has also re-evaluated the purpose of, and need for, the proposed project. Three new Runway Safety Area (RSA) alternatives have been developed that focus on enhancing the safety of the airport and meeting FAA safety standards while minimizing potential impacts to the environment. This NPC fully describes and evaluates these safety alternatives.

The NPC also evaluates these alternatives in the context of changes to the ambient environment. Since publication of the DEIR in 2005, the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program removed the spotted turtle from the state list of endangered and threatened species. The proponent has conducted additional field investigations of state-listed species habitats and updated the wetland delineation.

The New Bedford Regional Airport does not have adequate Runway Safety Areas (RSAs) for any of its runway ends. Section 2.5 of this NPC describes in detail the need for safety improvements. The purpose and need is two-fold. Improving RSAs on all runway ends would fulfill a public need to improve the safety and operational efficiency of the Airport. Improving Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF)/General Aviation (GA) facilities would fulfill the need to accommodate the Airport’s existing and future aviation demand. While improvements to RSAs will fulfill an overriding public interest and qualify for a variance for the Wetlands Protection Act, improvements to ARFF/GA facilities would fulfill the Airport’s GA needs and not be part of a variance request.

This report documents the need for safety and facility improvements at the New Bedford Regional Airport and substantiates the revised statement of project purpose, which is: To enhance the safety of aircraft and passengers using New Bedford Regional Airport by improving the Runway Safety Areas for both Runways 5-23 and 14-32 to meet FAA safety standards. The purpose of the project is also to provide aircraft hangar, apron, and support facilities for passenger, corporate jet, and GA users in order to meet current and future aviation demand.

The RSSA presented in the DEIS/DEIR resulted in approximately 7.44 acres of wetland impacts, including approximately 5.36 acres of wetland impacts for safety area improvements to RW 5-23. Because of the magnitude of this impact, and because the RSSA would impact the Acushnet Cedar Swamp State Reservation, three additional alternatives were developed that further reduce wetland impacts associated with improvements to the RSA for RW 5-23 and that would avoid the Acushnet swamp by placing part of New Plainville Road in a tunnel. Two of the alternatives include using Engineered Materials Arresting Systems (EMAS). These three alternatives and the No-Action Alternative are evaluated in this NPC.

The New Bedford Regional Airport Improvements Project consists of three distinct projects:

- Runway Safety Areas and Rehabilitation of RW 5-23
- Runway Safety Areas and Rehabilitation of RW 14-32
- New ARFF/GA facilities

These projects have independent utility and will be implemented as funding is available.

All alternatives would improve the safety areas to both runway ends and ARFF/GA facilities. Runway safety areas on RW 14-32 would be turfed for all three alternatives. Alternative 1 proposes standard partially paved RSAs on both ends of RW 5-23. Alternative 2 proposes a standard RSA on the 23 end and an EMAS bed on the RW 5 end. Alternative 3 proposes EMAS beds on each end of RW 5-23.

The project change would result in a significant decrease in environmental impacts when compared to the DEIS alternative. Proposed activities avoid impacts to Acushnet Cedar Swamp State Reservation; minimize wetland and floodplain impacts; minimize threatened and endangered species impacts; and have a purpose and need that could satisfy the variance requirements for the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. The project has been scaled down from airport expansion to airport safety improvements. Only safety areas would be improved and would not increase airport operations or generate further impacts. The proposed project elements avoid damage to the environment and minimize and mitigate for unavoidable environmental impacts. The project change would reduce bordering vegetated wetland impacts by 28.13 acres from the originally proposed 31.61 acres. The current proposed action (Alternative 1) would impact 3.48 acres of bordering vegetated wetland (5.16 acres of wetlands subject to Section 401 and 404 of the federal Clean Water Act). Proposed actions include tunneling New Plainville Road to avoid impacting the Acushnet Cedar Swamp State Reservation.

This NPC addresses all requirements of the Certificate. Therefore, the project proponent requests the Secretary withdraw the previous requirement for an SDEIR and issue a scope for a FEIR on the revised project as described in this NPC.