

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RECORD OF DECISION
FOR
THE SHIFT OF THE LOCATION OF THE APPROVED AIRPORT SITE
500 FEET TO THE EAST/NORTHEAST**

AT

**NEW GRIFFIN-SPALDING COUNTY AIRPORT
GRIFFIN, GEORGIA**

January 2021



**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF INTERMODAL-AVIATION PROGRAMS
STATE BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
ATLANTA AIRPORTS DISTRICT OFFICE**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RECORD OF DECISION**

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Record of Decision (ROD) announces final agency determinations and approvals for those Federal actions by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that are necessary to support the proposed modification to the development action as requested by the airport sponsor.

This FONSI/ROD provides the FAA's final determinations and approvals based on analyses described in detail in the *Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment for Proposed Replacement to Griffin-Spalding County Airport, Griffin, Georgia, December 2020*. The agency decision is based on information contained in the Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA), incorporated herein by reference, and all other applicable documents available to the agency.

II. STATE BLOCK GRANT AND FEDERAL ACTION

The proposed State Block Grant Action is the unconditional approval of the changes to the Airport Layout Plan that have been environmentally reviewed within the SEA and the possible future approval of state apportionment and entitlement funding for this project under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

The proposed Federal Action is the possible future approval of discretionary funding for this project under the AIP. The FAA has and approves no other Federal Action in this FONSI/ROD.

III. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need for the shift in the runway 500 feet was the result of the new FAA policy requirement that the Runway Protection Zones (RPZ) should be owned or controlled by the Sponsor and should not contain non-compatible land uses, including residences and roadways. This policy change occurred following FAA's Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) of March 12, 2013 for construction of a replacement airport to the existing Griffin-Spalding County Airport. An additional factor in consideration was the existence of a natural gas transmission line identified within the airport footprint that would require relocation. Based on the extraordinary expense that would be required to correct these deficiencies, it was decided to shift the airport site approximately 500 feet to the northeast. This shift will allow acquisition of the RPZs to eliminate any non-compatible land uses and to take the pipeline out of the project.

IV. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

Federal guidelines concerning the environmental review process require that all reasonable and practicable alternatives that might accomplish the objectives of a proposed project be identified and evaluated. Such an examination ensures that an alternative that addresses the project's purpose and that might enhance environmental quality, or have a less detrimental effect, has not been prematurely dismissed from consideration.

In the EA, reasonable and practicable alternatives were carefully examined. The alternatives considered are described below:

- No-Action
- The shift of the location of the runway 500 feet to the east/northeast

Of the alternatives considered, the Alternative to shift the airport site 500 feet to the east/northeast was selected for analysis in the SEA because it meets the stated purpose and need to meet FAA design and safety standards. The No-Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need but is required to be studied in the NEPA process.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

As documented in the attached SEA, the Proposed Project and No-Action Alternatives were evaluated for potential impacts to all environmental resource topic areas outlined in FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, FAA's Order implementing the NEPA.

Under the No-Action Alternative, the airport would be constructed as originally approved and there would be no additional associated environmental impacts, and the airport would not meet FAA design standards.

The following is a discussion of those resources identified as present and with potential to be significantly affected by Proposed Project. Other environmental categories studied in the SEA would not be significantly or permanently impacted by the Proposed Project.

Air quality impacts are not expected to significantly change because of the new Preferred Alternative. This project change will not increase aircraft operations. Emissions from construction equipment will be temporary and minimal and would not be considered to be a significant impact.

Biological resources (including fish, wildlife, and plants) impacts will not be significantly changed as a result of the new Preferred Alternative. Wetland areas and other Waters of the U.S. will lose habitat because of clearing and filling but will not significantly affect any species. A survey of the area found the presence of a species with state special status downstream of the airport location. Mitigation measures will be implemented to protect the Goldstripe Darter.

Department of Transportation Act (DOT), Section 4(f) lands will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. A portion of farm property, considered eligible for listing on the NRHP will be purchased. No structures or infrastructure will be purchased or significantly impacted. With the mitigation measures, impacts to this portion of the farm property is considered de minimis.

Farmland or farmland soils will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. A revised USDA AD-1006 form was completed with a revised conversion rating score of 93 points for the new Preferred Alternative. Therefore, since the revised score is well below the significance level of 160, the provisions of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) as they pertain to the protection of prime farmlands and soils of statewide importance are not applicable.

Hazardous materials, solid waste, and pollution prevention impacts are not expected to significantly increase as a result of the new Preferred Alternative. The new Preferred Alternative does not have the potential to violate applicable Federal, state, tribal or local laws or regulations regarding hazardous materials and/or solid waste management. The new Preferred Alternative does not involve a known contaminated site. The new Preferred Alternative does not have the potential to produce an appreciably different quantity or type of solid waste or use a different method of collection or disposal and does not have the potential to exceed local capacity or adversely affect human health or the environment.

Historical, architectural, archaeological and cultural resources will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. Approximately 24 acres of a historical farm property that is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be purchased. Of that property purchased, approximately 12 acres are presently in agricultural production as a pecan orchard. Three other sites within the APE are considered eligible for inclusion on the NRHP but will not be adversely affected. One additional site was discovered but additional analysis is required to determine its eligibility. If found to be a burial site, as suggested in the Cultural Resources Survey, the site will be avoided, so there will be no adverse effect on this site. An MOA has been signed by the Sponsors, GDOT, FAA, and Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure the mitigation, avoidance, and minimization of any impacts to these sites. Mitigation measures below enforce the MOA.

Land Use surrounding the new Preferred Alternative site will not be significantly impacted. Natural Resources and Energy Supply will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. The new Preferred Alternative Project will not have the potential to cause demand to exceed available or future supplies of these resources.

Noise and non-compatible land use will not significantly change by constructing the new Preferred Alternative. The compatibility of the existing land uses surrounding the airport will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. Aircraft operations are not expected to exceed levels that would cause significant impacts off airport property.

Socioeconomics, environmental justice, and children's environmental health and safety risks will not be significantly impacted by the new Preferred Alternative. Forty-four parcels of the new site were included in the original EA. Acquisition of those parcels is complete. The new Preferred Alternative requires acquisition of an additional 19 parcels. Six of those parcels are expected to be residential relocations. All acquisitions are being completed in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act. With the acquisition and relocation of the additional residential properties, there is no potential to lead to a disproportionately high and adverse impact to any low-income or minority population or lead to a disproportionate health or safety risk to children. The new Preferred Alternative will not have the potential to significantly change economic growth, divide or disrupt communities, cause extensive relocations, disrupt local traffic, or significantly change the tax base of the community as identified in the original EA and FONSI/ROD.

Visual effects (including light emissions) will not be significantly affected or changed by the new Preferred Alternative. The new Preferred Alternative will not create annoyance or interfere with normal activities from light emissions or affect the visual character of the area due to light emissions at the new site. The new Preferred Alternative does not have the potential to significantly affect the nature of the visual character of the area or block or obstruct any view of visual resources. If necessary, the viewshed of one historic farm site may be screened by additional plantings near the site.

Water resources (including wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, groundwater, and wild and scenic rivers)

Wetlands will be impacted by the new Preferred Alternative by the filling of approximately 0.75 acre, an increase from the original site which had no impacts. With appropriate mitigation, purchase of credits at an approved bank, and with design, impact to wetlands is not considered to be significant.

Floodplains will be impacted by construction of the new Preferred Alternative but the impacts have been reduced from 33.5 acres to 15.5, acres. With appropriate mitigation and design, impact to floodplains is not considered to be significant.

Water Quality, with appropriate mitigation indicated below, will not significantly change by implementing the new Preferred Alternative.

Stream impacts will be increased from 7,386 linear feet to 8,682 linear feet with construction of the new Preferred Alternative. Avoidance measures will be implemented where possible. The Sponsors will purchase credits based on the issued 404 permit from USACE.

State or Federal designated wild and scenic rivers are not located near the airport, so none will be affected by the new Preferred Alternative.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION

This Finding is contingent upon the Airport Sponsors' implementation of the following new mitigation measures that include modified measures from the FONSI signed on March 11, 2013:

1. The Airport Sponsor shall obtain all permits required by Federal, state and local laws and regulations for this project prior to start of any construction for which the permit is applicable.
2. An erosion and sedimentation control plan that includes the use of construction controls to prevent degradation of water quality and potential associated impacts on aquatic ecology shall be approved by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division prior to start of the project and shall be implemented during the project. Any bare soil within the project area will be immediately planted and established with native grasses.
3. The USACE 404 permit shall be obtained prior to start of work in any Waters of the U.S. All measures that may be required by the permit become enforceable mitigation measures of this FONSI. Any credits required as a condition of USACE permits shall be purchased prior to the start of any construction for which a permit is required. A Section 401, Water Quality Certification shall be acquired prior to start of construction.
4. Floodplain impacts shall be coordinated with GDNR Floodplain Management Unit and FEMA and will ensure that the construction will cause less than a one-foot increase in the base flood elevation within the floodplain areas. If necessary, a No-impact certificate, Letter of Map Revision or a Conditional Letter of Map Revision shall be obtained prior to start of construction. Modifications to the floodplains shall be designed to minimize adverse impacts to flood elevations on adjacent properties and upstream. The project shall be designed to allow adequate flow circulation and preserve the free and natural drainage. Pervious surface material should be used where possible.
5. The Sponsors shall complete annual monitoring of water quality and fish communities at three (3) sites within the Cabin Creek system beginning the year project construction begins and extending for at least three (3) years following project completion. The purpose of the monitoring is to assess impacts of the project on water quality and fish communities and more specifically to

determine the persistence of the Goldstripe Darter downstream of the project area. Two of the project sites should be located downstream of the project area and the third site should be located in a comparable sized tributary that can serve as a control for natural environmental variation. GDNR must approve the monitoring plan and it shall be in place prior to start of any construction.

6. BMPs that decrease the magnitude and velocity of airport runoff into Cabin Creek and its tributaries shall be implemented as recommended by GDNR. Such practices will reduce impacts to hydrology and should increase the probability that the Goldstripe Darter persists following project completion. At the start of any construction, the Sponsors shall be required to comply with this measure and ensure that the water quality is preserved during construction and during the future operation of the airport.

7. Any stream mitigation required for this project shall emphasize the restoration and/or preservation of small stream habitats utilized by the Goldstripe Darter. If possible, these streams should occur within HUC 10 watersheds having known occurrences of Goldstripe Darter. A stream mitigation plan shall be developed with the guidance of GDNR and implemented prior to start of construction.

8. The Aquatic Species Survey Report shall be coordinated with GDNR with the recommendation that BMP's are used at the site to minimize impacts to the State Rare Species. This includes following the conditions intended to minimize impacts to the state protected species, including construction commitments for activities in close proximity to the known location of the identified Goldstripe Darter (*Etheostoma parvipinne*). Site grading and clearing shall be evaluated during detailed design to reduce the linear feet of impacts. In the areas where the impacts cannot be avoided; the use of bottomless culverts, buried culverts, and other BMP's to reduce the impact of the project on these resources shall be explored and approved for implementation by GDNR.

9. Special Provision shall be accepted by GDNR prior to start of design, and site and downstream designs shall be incorporated into plans and specifications and implemented and completed prior to final inspection of the airport construction and completed in accordance with GDNR requirements to protect the State Species of Concern.

10. The project shall comply with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water permit(s), as applicable. The construction contracts shall include compliance with Georgia Environmental Protection Division General NPDES Permit process.

11. Waste and spoils disposal shall be controlled to prevent contamination of ground and surface waters.

12. Construction activity shall conform to requirements of FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10, Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports, and FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33 Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports.

13. All property acquisitions shall be completed in accordance with the Uniform Relocations Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Act.

14. Prior to acquiring any property, an Environmental Due Diligence Audit shall be conducted on the property by a competent specialist. FAA Order 1050.19, Environmental Due Diligence Audits in the conduct of FAA Real Property Transactions should be followed, with written reports

submitted for each acquired parcel. Any hazardous materials or other contaminated sites must be removed prior to acquisition of the parcel.

15. Measures shall be taken during clearing and trimming to prevent or minimize the spread of invasive species. Care shall be taken to ensure that invasive species or non-native species are not introduced or spread into the area by clearing and replanting activities.

16. Once the property has been acquired, and prior to start of any ground disturbance, the archaeological Site 9SP216 (rock pile) shall be thoroughly analyzed for the presence of a burial site. If found to be a burial site, the total site, along with a 30' buffer shall be fenced with a minimum 6' chain link fence so that there can be no ground disturbance in this area. A cultural resources survey report shall be prepared and submitted to GA SHPO for concurrence. If found to be a burial site, a plan will be prepared for preservation of the site. GDOT and GA SHPO must concur with the preservation plan.

17. Archaeological sites 9SP191 (the Hopkins Tract) and 9SP213 (the Thomas-Bennett house site) will not be affected by the Undertaking, but because they are being purchased by the Sponsors, the sites, including a 25' buffer (as determined by a qualified archaeologist) shall be fenced and preserved as soon as the acquisition has been completed. Fencing shall be at a minimum a 6' chain link fence. If at any time in the future, disturbance (including tree removal) may be required, a survey of the sites shall be conducted to determine if artifact recovery is recommended. If recommended, the appropriate plan shall be completed and approved by GDOT and GA SHPO and recovery completed in accordance with the plan.

18. Architectural Resource 9-Central Hall House will not be affected by the Undertaking, but a portion of the historical farm property, that has lost all historical integrity, will be purchased for the Undertaking. At the conclusion of clearing and grading, if deemed necessary by SHPO, appropriate screening of the house, shall be designed, approved, and installed prior to completion of the project.

19. Approximately 24 acres of Resource 1-Thomas-Melin Farm property will be adversely affected by the Undertaking. Approximately 12 of those acres are currently under agriculture production (pecan trees). The minimal amount of land from the farm will be converted to airport use and shall be limited to only that necessary to meet FAA airport standards. All of the existing farm structures and infrastructure shall be avoided, including the identified boundary of the associated archaeological site. Prior to acquisition of the farm property, a pictorial archival record will be completed of the whole farm property and structures in accordance with the MOA. The need for farm viewshed screening will be assessed and put into place at the conclusion of clearing and grading, if deemed necessary by SHPO.

20. The MOA, signed by the Sponsors that includes all details of the mitigation and protection of historical resources discussed above, and shall be specifically followed through all steps in the process of constructing the airport. All information, including artifacts and photography, gained through the research, excavation, or recovery shall be combined into a record that will be curated at an appropriate facility, approved by SHPO.

21. Should any cultural resources or archaeological artifacts be discovered during construction, work shall immediately stop, and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer notified.

22. Stormwater ponds should not be constructed on or near airports because of their potential to attract wildlife/birds that could become a hazard to air navigation. Great care should be taken in

decisions for the necessity and location of stormwater detention ponds and eliminate them if possible. If it is determined that a pond is a requirement, it should be constructed so as to limit the attractiveness of the ponds to hazardous wildlife, and in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33, Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports. It shall be the responsibility of the Sponsor to monitor any ponds to ensure that they do not become a hazardous wildlife attractant, and to take immediate action if hazardous wildlife is observed utilizing the pond.

23. Any changes to the development footprint of 553 acres, as shown on the approved ALP and as identified in the SEA, shall be subject to additional environmental analysis and must be completed prior to any construction activities in those areas. Should additional impacts to wetlands or streams be identified to occur, beyond those identified in the SEA and USACE permit, the SEA and permit shall be updated, and appropriate approval received prior to those additional impacts occurring.

24. Minimize impacts to local public roadway traffic during the construction phase by utilizing haul routes recommended in the EA, particularly during AM and PM peak traffic hours, and providing maintenance of traffic on affected roadways during construction.

Proposed changes in, or deletion of, a mitigation measure that is included as a condition of this approval must be reviewed and approved by the signing official of the Finding of No Significant Impact. Steps will be taken through grant agreements, licenses, contract specifications, operating specifications, directives, and other project review or implementation procedures to monitor and enforce implementation of the mitigation measures listed above.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public hearing was held on January 22, 2019. The SEA also included a review and coordination process involving applicable Federal, state, and local government agencies. Comments received from public and agency coordination have been addressed in the SEA. Another opportunity for public review and comment was published in the local newspaper and on the Sponsor's website from December 11-28, 2020. No public comments were received.

VIII. AGENCY FINDINGS

In accordance with applicable law, the FAA makes the following findings/determinations for the Proposed Project, based upon the appropriate information and data contained in the SEA.

The following determinations are prescribed by the statutory provisions set forth in the Airport Airway Improvement Act of 1982, as codified in 49 U.S.C. Sections 44502, 47106 and 47107.

- The Proposed Project is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce or for national defense [49 U.S.C. §44502(b)].
- The project is reasonably consistent with existing plans of public agencies for development of the area surrounding the airport [49 U.S.C. §47106(a)(1)].
- The interests of the community in or near which the project may be located have been given fair consideration [49 U.S.C. §47106(b)(2)].
- The airport sponsor certifies that it has provided an opportunity for a public hearing [49 U.S.C. §47106(c)(1)(A)(i)].

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned find that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101(a) of NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements, and with the mitigation that is a part of the project, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

The signatures of the State Block Grant and FAA officials below represent the approval of environmental findings pertaining only to the actions for which each agency is responsible as described in section II, above.

Carol L. Comer
Digitally signed by Carol L. Comer
DN: C=US, E=cocomer@dot.ga.gov,
O=Georgia Department of Transportation,
OU=Division of Intermodal, CN=Carol L.
Comer
Date: 2021.01.07 15:03:45-05'00'

1/7/2021

Carol L. Comer, Director
Division of Intermodal
Georgia Department of Transportation
State Block Grant Program Representative

Date

Larry F. Clark, Manager
FAA, Atlanta Airports District Office

Date

January 8, 2021

DECISION AND ORDER

The FAA has determined that environmental and other relevant concerns presented by interested agencies and private citizens have been addressed sufficiently in the SEA, hereby acknowledged and fully and properly considered in the decision-making, resulting in this Record of Decision (ROD). The FAA concludes that there are no outstanding environmental issues to be resolved by the agency with respect to the Proposed Project as pertaining to the possible future approval of discretionary funding for this project under the AIP, which is the only Federal Action approved by this ROD..

The No-Action Alternative fails to meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Project. For reasons summarized earlier in this FONSI/ROD, and supported by disclosures and analysis detailed in the SEA, the FAA has determined that the Sponsor's Proposed Project is reasonable, feasible and practicable, and considered prudent for a Federal decision in light of established goals and objectives. An FAA decision to take the actions and approvals identified herein is consistent with its statutory mission and policies supported by the findings and conclusions reflected in the environmental documentation and this FONSI/ROD.

After reviewing the SEA and all of its related materials, I have carefully considered the FAA's goals and objectives in relation to various aeronautical aspects of the proposed development actions discussed in the SEA, including the purpose and need to be met by this project, the alternative means of achieving them, the environmental impacts of these alternatives, the mitigation necessary to preserve and enhance the environment, and the costs and benefits of achieving the purpose and need.

While this decision does not approve Federal funding for the proposed airport development and does not constitute a Federal funding commitment, it does provide the environmental findings and approval for proceeding to discretionary funding actions in accordance with established procedures and applicable requirements.

Issued in College Park, Georgia

January 8, 2021

Larry F. Clark, Manager
FAA, Atlanta Airports District Office

Date

Right of Appeal

This order constitutes a final agency action and order of the Administrator under 49 U.S.C. § 46110 as to the specific FAA decision(s) contained herein. Any party having a substantial interest may appeal this order to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit or in the court of appeals of the United States for the circuit in which the person resides or has its principal place of business, upon petition, filed within 60 days after entry of this order.