



## Meeting minutes

Project name: DTL Runway 13/31 Extension  
NEPA / 404 Merger Process  
Concurrence Point #2 Meeting – Array of Alternatives & Alternatives Carried Forward  
December 17, 2015

### Attendees

Bob Louiseau (via telephone)  
Mark Hagen (via telephone)  
Denise Oakes (via telephone)  
Jim Brist (via telephone)  
Virginia Laszewski (via telephone)  
KerryAnn Weaver (via telephone)  
Larry Puchalski (via telephone)  
Toni Merdan  
Julie Carr  
Chris Meyer  
Josh Fitzpatrick  
Tracy Schmidt  
Gina Mitchell  
Lindsay Butler  
Laura Morland (via telephone)  
Erica Pergande (via telephone)  
Bryan Page  
Evan Barrett

### Representing

City of Detroit Lakes  
City of Detroit Lakes  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Office of US Congressman Collin C. Peterson  
MnDOT Office of Aeronautics  
MnDOT Office of Aeronautics  
FAA DMA Airports District Office  
FAA DMA Airports District Office  
FAA DMA Airports District Office  
FAA DMA Airports District Office  
Mead & Hunt  
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*The attached report represents this writer's interpretation of items discussed during the meeting. Any corrections or additional information should be brought to our attention for clarification.*

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Present, discuss, and seek Army Corps concurrence on the Array of Alternatives considered and Alternatives Carried Forward documentation.
- Present and seek feedback on preliminary wetland mitigation concepts for the proposed runway project.

### Items discussed were as follows:

After introduction of participants, Josh Fitzpatrick kicked off the meeting by providing an update on the status of Army Corps concurrence with the Project Purpose & Need discussed at the previous meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The Corps has requested some refinements to the Project Purpose statement, with the comment that the draft statement as written was too prescriptive. FAA has provided the Corps with a

revised Purpose statement and is awaiting concurrence. Virginia Laszewski asked whether the revisions will affect the alternatives developed, and Mr. Fitzpatrick responded that they would not because the revisions serve to make the Purpose statement broader and not specific to the existing Airport site.

Evan Barrett provided a recap of the NEPA/404 process and projected timeline. He noted that at the previous meeting there was a request to integrate the 404 permitting schedule into the project timeline, but that it was not added because the permit application will not be submitted to the Corps until after the FAA environmental determination. Ms. Laszewski requested that the timeline be updated to clarify State Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) versus Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) project scoping milestones, 404 permitting, Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) process, and the implementation schedule for the City's wastewater treatment plant facilities plan.

Mr. Barrett then directed participants to the revised Concurrence Point 2 technical memorandum dated December 14<sup>th</sup>. The first information requirement is a restatement of the Purpose & Need, which Mr. Fitzpatrick covered at the outset of the meeting and was included in the technical memorandum.

The second requirement is a narrative of the process used to identify the full range of alternatives, prior to application of the screening process. He provided a summary of key dates in the development alternatives as presented in the attached PowerPoint slides.

The third requirement is a list and brief description of each alternative considered. A range of ten alternatives at the existing Airport site and seven alternatives at alternate sites were considered. These alternatives are described and evaluated in technical memoranda provided to the group in advance of the meeting.

The fourth requirement is a narrative summarizing the screening process used to identify alternatives carried forward, and the fifth requirement describes why each alternative was either dismissed from further consideration or carried forward for further analysis. Mr. Barrett said that two primary evaluation criteria were applied to the existing Airport site alternatives: 1) does the alternative meet the project objectives, and 2) what are the primary environmental impacts associated with the alternative. He then discussed each individual alternative and described how these criteria were applied to identify recommended alternatives to carry forward for detailed environmental analysis, which include existing Airport site alternatives 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 as described in the December 14<sup>th</sup> technical memorandum.

KerryAnn Weaver asked if jurisdictional streams were considered in development of alternatives, as they are not specifically identified on the graphics or in the narrative. Mr. Barrett said that all wetland impacts associated with the project are assumed to be jurisdictional, i.e. waters of the United States. Mr. Fitzpatrick said that these would be direct impacts, and that there is possibility of secondary impacts. Ms. Weaver said it would be helpful to know more specifics regarding how the County Ditch east of the Airport would be affected by each alternative. Mr. Barrett noted that this was not evaluated in detail during the alternatives screening process, but will be evaluated more closely in the EA itself for those alternatives carried forward.

Ms. Laszewski asked which design standards are waived by the Airport's current license waiver from MnDOT. Mr. Barrett said that the alternatives that provide compliant Runway Safety Area (RSA) and Runway Object Free Area (ROFA), and clear Part 77 approach surfaces, will not require continuation of the license waiver. Chris Meyer at MnDOT confirmed that the waiver applies specifically to these standards. Mr. Barrett noted that elimination of the license waiver is central to the Project Purpose & Need, and therefore any alternatives that do not eliminate the waiver are not recommended to be carried forward. Mr. Meyer noted that US Highway 10 is not the only issue associated with the waiver, as there is also a private entrance road from the highway that also conflicts with the design standards. He also stated that any issues related to Airport safety zoning and tree removal must be given adequate consideration in the EA.

Ms. Laszewski asked that driveways, railroads, treatment plant, and other features noted in the narrative should be depicted and/or labeled on the alternative graphics, as it is unclear where some of features are located. She also requested that the full extent of the safety zones be shown to evaluate impacts. Further, she asked that it be made clearer in both the narrative and on the graphics which standards are associated with the MnDOT license waiver. Tree clearing and cutting/conversion will also be included in the impacts section of the document.

During discussion of Alternative 8, which involves installation of an Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS) on the Runway 13 end, Ms. Laszewski noted that a graphic of this alternative would be helpful. This alternative is not recommended to carry forward. However, Lindsay Butler asked why EMAS was not considered for mitigating RSA issues and reducing wetland impacts on the Runway 31 end. Mr. Barrett said that Mead & Hunt would develop Runway 31 EMAS options for each alternative carried forward, including potential wetland impact reductions and costs. These options will be presented at the next Concurrence Point meeting, at which time Mead & Hunt would make a recommendation whether they should be carried forward into detailed NEPA review. The FAA will circulate these EMAS alternatives via email to the workgroup prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Barrett then provided an overview of the Alternate Airport Site Analysis Re-evaluation described in a technical memorandum dated November 20<sup>th</sup> and provided to the agency working group in advance of the meeting. He described the set of 11 criteria applied to identify and evaluate the seven alternate sites, including the following:

1. Location
2. Jurisdiction
3. Accessibility
4. Existing Infrastructure
5. Topography
6. Wildlife
7. Shoreland Buffer
8. Wetlands
9. Tree Removal
10. Residential Impacts
11. Noise Concerns

The conclusion of the re-evaluation was that relocating the airport would not be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA), and is likely to cost at least three times as much as the on-site alternatives. Therefore, it is recommended that the alternate sites not be carried forward for further NEPA review.

Ms. Laszewski asked for elaboration on why Site 7 would involve so few wetland impacts, and why it would not be considered further. Mr. Barrett said that this alternative was located in an upland area with significant terrain. Because airports must be relatively flat, this site would require significant grading and earthwork, with associated environmental impact. However flatter sites are more likely to have wetlands because they are typically in low-lying areas.

Mr. Fitzpatrick discussed the methodology used by the re-evaluation study. He said that any potential site is likely to have wetland impacts and tree removal, the latter of which may involve impacts to the threatened Northern Long-Eared Bat. Ms. Butler said she recently worked on an in-depth alternate site study which encountered problems related to cultural artifacts due to the extensive grading associated with site preparation for a new airport. Mr. Fitzpatrick added that DTL is located on what was once the shoreline of a glacial lake during the Ice Age, which were typically location of native encampments. Ms. Laszewski asked whether tribal coordination had been done. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he was in the process of assembling the Section 106 package and would be initiating this coordination soon.

Discussion ensued regarding next steps for incorporating new EMAS alternatives requested by FAA. Mr. Barrett asked whether the Army Corps could issue concurrences on points 1 and 2 concurrently. Larry Puchalski said he would have to run it by management, but would provide them with his thoughts on the matter. Ms. Laszewski asked whether the Army Corps would need to see the new alternatives before providing concurrence with point 2, and it was generally agreed that they would. It was agreed that these new alternatives would be presented at the beginning of the Concurrence Point 3 meeting tentatively scheduled for late January, and that information regarding these alternatives would be provided to the agency group well in advance.

Mr. Barrett then introduced Erica Pergande, wetland scientist, from Mead & Hunt who has been working with project scientist Perry Rossa on wetland studies associated with the project. Ms. Pergande provided an overview of on-site and off-site mitigation concepts, and recent coordination with resource agency staff regarding available wetland bank credits and the potential opportunity for using the two soon-to-be-abandoned sewage treatment ponds as a wetland mitigation site. Wetland bank credits would be fairly expensive and difficult to find, and should be reserved as soon as possible. Restoring the sewage treatment ponds to fresh wet meadow may be a better option than purchasing bank credits as it would provide more in-watershed attenuation of upstream pollutants as well as better meet the sequencing tenets of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). Affected hardwood swamp wetlands would have to be mitigated elsewhere. Ms. Pergande noted that vegetation in the restored wetlands could be selected that discourage use by waterfowl and thereby mitigate wildlife hazards. She also noted that Mead & Hunt is looking at the TMDL study recently completed for St. Clair Lake and will consider how the restored wetlands can receive and filter stormwater from the area.

Ms. Weaver asked if the pond was built prior to 1970 and whether the sewage treatment ponds were previously part of the affected wetland complex. Ms. Pergande said that both of those were true, and that the larger pond is surrounded by a manmade berm. Ms. Weaver said this may offer better potential for success. She also asked whether the access road between Airport Road and US Highway 59 would be removed, which it would. Mr. Barrett stated this road is currently controlled access and only used by treatment plant personnel.

There was a question of whether the rapid infiltration basins (RIBs) northwest of the large sewage treatment pond could also provide additional restoration potential if the berms were removed, and if the RIBs would be decommissioned at the same time as the ponds. The intent is to decommission simultaneously, and Ms. Pergande said using the RIBs would be subject of further study in the EA. Another question was raised regarding where the Airport property drains to. Mr. Barrett said the Airport generally drains southeast to the large wetland complex and County Ditch 14. Bob Louiseau with the City said stormwater infiltrates on-site in normal conditions. Ms. Laszewski asked whether the "Ditch 14" depicted in the memo graphic was the same as the "Ditch 9" identified in a separate study. Mr. Louiseau confirmed that it was the same ditch. It will be referenced as Ditch 14 going forward.

Discussion ensued about the wildlife hazard evaluation and how it would need to be associated with the proposed mitigation concept. A wildlife hazard assessment (WHA) completed in 2012 will be used to identify and vet potential issues. It was noted that if onsite mitigation were to occur, the WHA recommended removal of the wastewater ponds as that was the highest concentration of resident and migratory avian fauna. The proposal to restore the ponds to a fresh meadow system would act as a deterrent to the larger avian predators, but may attract some low flying grassland birds. Mr. Barrett concluded by saying that the on-site mitigation concept could account for most if not all of the required mitigation, and any remainder could be mitigated with off-site wetland bank credits. Ms. Butler said that this project is supported by FAA and has a high profile. Ms. Laszewski requested that meeting minutes be distributed to the group. Mr. Barrett said these would be distributed by Christmas.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45am.