

5 Coordination and Public Involvement

This chapter discusses coordination and public involvement associated with the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is the lead federal agency to ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for this project and has the discretion to determine the appropriate level of public involvement. The coordination and public involvement for this project comply with public involvement requirements and policies including NEPA, as amended, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA* (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§ 1503.1(a) and 1506.6), FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, and FAA Order 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*.

NEPA and the CEQ Regulations, in describing the public involvement process, require federal agencies to: consider environmental information in their decision-making process; solicit appropriate information from the public; fully assess and disclose potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed action and alternatives; and provide the public with this information and allow it to comment on these findings.¹³⁴ While community involvement does not always lead to fully supported decisions, especially where there is a wide diversity of community views, decisions informed by community concerns can better serve the collective public interest and build trust in the FAA by establishing regular communications and involvement with the community throughout a project that has raised community concerns.

The following sections describe the public involvement activities that have been done to consult effectively with the public about their views, concerns, and ideas regarding the EA, the NEPA process and, ultimately, the adequacy of the EA environmental analyses. In addition, the sections also document agency coordination, including Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation and coordination among others.

The EA process has had several opportunities for public outreach activities that are described in this chapter. The public outreach efforts for this EA have been developed to solicit input from, and provide information to the following groups:

- General population overall,
- General population with identified environmental impacts,
- General Environmental Justice (EJ) population,
- EJ population with identified environmental impacts, and
- Federal and state agencies.

5.1 Public Website and Project Mailing List

At the beginning of the EA process, a public website (<https://www.airportprojects.net/rdu-ea/>) was developed to keep the general public informed about the EA, the NEPA process, and opportunities for public participation during the EA process. The website is being maintained throughout the EA process to keep the public updated on the NEPA process, project developments, and opportunities for public involvement. The intended audience of the public website is the general population overall (which includes the general public, general public with identified impacts, general EJ population, EJ population with identified impacts, and federal, state, and local agencies).

¹³⁴ FAA Order 1050.1F

A mailing list with contact information for individuals, federal, state, and local agencies, and other interested parties has been developed and is being maintained throughout the EA process. The public was able to join the mailing list by subscribing on the EA project website. The public could enter their name and email address, then click “register” to request notifications about important events throughout the EA process.

5.2 Scoping Outreach

For this EA, the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority (Airport Authority) and the FAA completed several scoping activities. Scoping is an early and open process that solicits input from the public to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the EA and to identify any significant environmental issues related to the Proposed Action. The scoping process is meant to focus the EA analysis on the most pertinent issues and impacts.

5.2.1 Public Scoping

Due to health precautions related to COVID-19, there was no in-person scoping meeting. The Airport Authority and the FAA posted a narrated presentation for the public to review on the EA project website. The presentation described the Proposed Action, the EA NEPA review process, and opportunities to learn more about the purpose and need, potential alternatives, and the environmental resources to be analyzed. Notifications for the availability of the virtual presentation were published in the local newspaper before the presentation was posted on the EA project website. The notice and link to the presentation were also published on the main RDU website and a blog was posted on the RDU website (<https://www.rdu.com/rdu-preparing-to-replace-its-longest-runway/>). Both a legal ad and display ad were published in the local newspaper, the News & Observer (the legal ad and display ad was published June 21, 2021, and a follow up display ad was published again on July 12, 2021). A legal ad is located in the legal section of the newspaper and provides formal notice of the public scoping. A display ad was located within the main section of the newspaper and was provided to garner greater public attention than just a listing in the legal section. The virtual presentation was posted to the EA project website on July 21, 2021. See **Appendix A Agency and Public Involvement** for the ads.

A telephone number was made available for members of the public to request special accommodations, such as audio or visual assistance, if people did not have internet access. The telephone number was provided on the virtual presentation and on the legal and display ads. Letters were mailed directly to property owners near the proposed borrow areas to inform them about the scoping activities. A display ad was also published one time in Spanish in the La Conexión newspaper on June 23, 2021, to alert the public about the scoping activities. The display ad in Spanish had the same content as the display ad in English published in the News & Observer newspaper. See Appendix A Agency and Public Involvement.

The virtual presentation and the newspaper notices provided the timeframe for the public to provide comments. Comments on the scoping presentation were accepted through email and mail for 30 days after the presentation was posted on the EA project website.

5.2.2 Agency Scoping

Key governmental agencies were invited to attend an online agency scoping meeting. The Airport Authority and the FAA conducted the agency scoping meeting at 10:00 a.m. on August 4, 2021. At this meeting, the Airport Authority conducted a presentation about the Proposed Action and the preliminary scope of environmental analysis to be included in the EA.

A list of the key governmental agencies invited to the agency scoping meeting are shown in **Table 5-1**.

TABLE 5-1, AGENCIES INVITED TO AGENCY SCOPING MEETINGS

FEDERAL AGENCIES
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
STATE AGENCIES
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (NCSHPO)
North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ)
North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNR) Division of Parks and Recreation
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
North Carolina State Clearinghouse

5.2.3 Scoping Comments

All of the public and agency comments received during the scoping comment period from federal, state, and local agencies, organizations, and individuals were collected and reviewed by the Airport Authority and the FAA in their entirety. There were 138 public comment submissions and six agency comment submissions for a total of 144 total comment submissions.¹³⁵ There were a number of people who submitted more than one comment. The Airport Authority and the FAA then categorized and grouped the scoping comments into major topics. The scoping comments received fell into 17 major topics:

1. General Comments
2. Proposed Action
3. Purpose and Need
4. Alternatives
5. Umstead State Park
6. Noise
7. Biological Resources

¹³⁵ The submission by the State Environmental Review Clearinghouse contained comments from various divisions of NCDEQ, however, they were all considered one submission since they were provided by the Clearinghouse.

8. Air Quality/Climate
9. Water Resources
10. Hazardous Materials
11. Public Outreach
12. Study Areas
13. Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources
14. U.S. Department of Transportation 4(f)
15. Cumulative Impacts
16. Environmental Justice
17. Energy Efficiency and Recycling

From each major topic, unique individual comments were identified and numbered. All of the scoping comments received and the responses to the comments are provided in Appendix A Agency and Public Involvement.

5.3 Outreach Prior to Release of the Draft EA

Several outreach efforts were conducted between scoping and the public release of the Draft EA.

5.3.1 Outreach to Specific Agencies

In addition to the scoping activities previously described in this chapter and provided in Appendix A, the FAA also conducted coordination with specific agencies. For the ESA Section 7 consultation, the FAA's biological resource findings were submitted to the USFWS on October 19, 2022. The USFWS concurred with FAA's determination in a letter dated November 15, 2022. See Section 4.3 Biological Resources and **Appendix D Biological Resources** for FAA's coordination with the USFWS. The FAA initiated conferencing on the Tricolored Bat but has stopped the process at the request of the Airport Authority. Should the Tricolored Bat be listed the project would have to go through consultation. The FAA has made a determination that the proposed project would not jeopardize the species. See Section 4.3, Biological Resources.

For the Section 106 of the NHPA consultation, the FAA requested concurrence of the Area of Potential Effect (APEs) and the methodology for the field surveys. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with FAA's APEs and methodology for this project via letter on March 14, 2022. The FAA also requested concurrence of their findings in a letter dated November 1, 2022. The SHPO concurred with FAA's findings for this project via letter on December 1, 2022 and January 9, 2023. See Section 4.7 Historic, Archeological, Architectural, and Cultural Resources and **Appendix E Section 106 Consultation** for FAA's coordination with the SHPO.

The FAA coordinated with USEPA concerning the Ward Transformer Superfund site. The FAA conducted a meeting with USEPA on June 28, 2022, to discuss potential hazardous material impacts. The USEPA confirmed the coordination in an email dated November 1, 2022. See Section 4.6 Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention for FAA's coordination with USEPA.

The FAA coordinated the air quality methodology with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) Division of Air Quality and the USEPA. The Division of Air Quality concurred with the methodology by email dated August 1, 2022. The USEPA concurred with the methodology by email dated August 8, 2022. See Section 4.2 Air Quality and **Appendix C Air Quality and Climate**.

5.3.2 Outreach to EJ Population with Identified Environmental Impacts

The preliminary EA analysis identified potential EJ populations along Marcom Drive, Sorrell Grove Church Road, Triple Oak Drive, Pleasant Grove Church Road, and Nelson Road that may be impacted by the Proposed Action. The Airport Authority and the FAA sent a certified letter (See **Appendix G Environmental Justice** for the letter template and list of addresses) directly to the residences identified as potentially impacted by the Proposed Action that were located along Marcom Drive, Sorrell Grove Church Road, Triple Oak Drive, Pleasant Grove Church Road, and Nelson Road. The letter invited the residents to a meeting, scheduled 30 days later, to discuss the project because of the potential environmental impacts to their residential area. A letter was also sent to Sorrells Grove Baptist Church and the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church to distribute the information to their members. This focus group meeting was only intended for those invited. On September 14, 2022, the Airport Authority and the FAA conducted one, in-person, small group meeting at the Airport (RDU Center Room 100) with this specific EJ population before the Draft EA was published. The Airport Authority and the FAA provided a brief PowerPoint presentation at this meeting. The Airport Authority and the FAA notified this specific EJ population that they could join the mailing list for notifications by subscribing on the EA project website.

5.3.3 Outreach to General EJ Population

Outreach was also conducted in an effort to connect with the general EJ population which may potentially be impacted by the project via unintended impacts. This general EJ population may utilize resources or routes/roadways that the Proposed Action may impact in a way that is unique to the community. On September 20, 2022, letters and emails were sent to community organizations such as churches and community centers as representatives of the general EJ population. The letter and the list of specific churches, community centers, food pantries and other organizations are listed in Appendix G Environmental Justice. This outreach is also known as a “grass-tops” approach, where local knowledge is gathered from organizations that may be uniquely in tune with minority and low-income populations. The intent was to reach out to community leaders and resource centers that EJ populations use so that this population can be informed and participate in the NEPA process and to identify specific ways that the general EJ community receives information. The intent was also to request information from these community organizations to identify any resources that are important to minority/low-income communities.

5.3.4 Outreach to Population with Potential Noise Impacts

The preliminary EA analysis identified residences that would be potentially impacted by a change in aircraft noise due to the Proposed Action. Letters were mailed directly to residences located within the potential noise significant impact area for the Proposed Action to ensure they are aware of the project and have an opportunity to participate in the public outreach efforts. The letter (see **Appendix F Noise** for letter template and list of addresses) provided how these residences could receive information about the Proposed Action at the following website (<https://www.airportprojects.net/rdu-ea/>) and that they could sign up to be notified of upcoming events through this website. If they do not have computer access, they could call Landrum & Brown’s RDU EA support number at (984) 275-3167 and leave a message and someone will get back with them to provide additional information.

5.4 Availability of the Draft EA

The Notice of Availability of the Draft EA and Notice of Intent to Hold a Public Hearing / Workshop was published on January 25, 2023 announcing the start of a 45-day public comment period. Since the end date is on a Saturday, March 11, the public comment period was extended to the following Monday, March 13. Comments were due no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern on Monday, March 13, 2023. Both a legal ad and display ad were published in the News & Observer. See **Appendix A Agency and Public Involvement** for the ads. A notice was also placed on the EA project website. The Airport Authority also published the notice through their social media accounts. A paper copy of the Draft EA was made available for public review at each of the following locations during normal business hours.

- RDU Center 1000 Trade Drive, Raleigh, NC 27623
- Leesville Community Library 5105 Country Trail, Raleigh, NC 27613
- Duraleigh Road Community Library 5800 Duraleigh Rd, Raleigh, NC 27612
- Morrisville Community Library 310 Town Hall Dr, Morrisville, NC 27560
- West Regional Library 4000 Louis Stephens Dr, Cary, NC 27519
- Durham County- South Regional Library 4505 S Alston Ave, Durham, NC 27713

Emails and letters were sent to the agencies identified for coordination to alert them about the availability of the Draft EA and the Public Hearing / Workshop.

5.5 Public Hearing / Workshop

A Public Hearing / Workshop was held on February 28, 2023, between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The purpose of the Public Workshop was to summarize the findings of the Draft EA. The purpose of the Public Hearing was to provide an opportunity to receive verbal comments from the public on the Draft EA. The FAA and the Airport Authority held the Public Hearing / Workshop in Room 100 of RDU Center, located at 1000 Trade Drive, Raleigh, NC 27623. Signs with arrows directing members of the public to Room 100 were set up outside RDU Center. A telephone number was made available for the public to request special accommodations, such as audio or visual assistance or specific language translation services. No special accommodations were requested.

5.6 Comments on the Draft EA

The agencies and the public had the following four ways to provide comments on the Draft EA:

- Submit written comments on a comment form at the public workshop and hearing;
- Provide comments orally to a court reporter at the public workshop and hearing;
- Submit comments electronically during the comment period to RDUEA@landrumbrown.com; or
- Mail written comments during the comment period to Chris Babb Landrum & Brown RE: RDU EA, 4445 Lake Forest Drive, Suite 700 Cincinnati, OH 45242

5.7 Responses to Comments on the Draft EA

All of the comments received during the Draft EA comment period from federal, state, and local agencies, organizations, and individuals were collected and reviewed by the FAA, the USACE, and the Airport Authority in their entirety. The comments received were identified as either agency or public comments. There were four agency comment submissions¹³⁶. Agency comments were categorized as (AC) and numbered sequentially. There were three different types of public comments received (workshop comments, transcript comments, and email comments). During the Public Workshop/ Hearing six workshop comment forms were collected. These public workshop comments were categorized as (WC) and numbered sequentially. Also, during the Public Workshop / Hearing, 13 people offered verbal comments to a court reporter. These public transcript comments were categorized as (TC) and numbered sequentially. There were also 68 public email comments categorized as (EC) and numbered sequentially. The Airport Authority and the FAA then generally categorized and grouped the comments received on the Draft EA into major topics. Some comments may refer to more than one major topic. From each major topic, unique individual comments were identified and numbered. All of the comments received and how they were grouped are included in **Appendix J Responses to Comments**. Appendix J Responses to Comments provides all of the comments received, identifies the assigned comment identification number, name of the commenter, the type of comments including if the comment was agency or public, and the index of the submission into the comment summary number. The Airport Authority and the FAA prepared responses to the comments received on the Draft EA. Appendix J Responses to Comments also presents each major topic, the comment summary number, the summary comment, and the response.

¹³⁶ The submission by the State Environmental Review Clearinghouse contained comments from various divisions of NCDEQ, however, they were all considered one submission since they were provided by the Clearinghouse.