

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction and Project Overview**

The Port of Ephrata in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is updating the Airport Master Plan for Ephrata Municipal Airport (FAA airport identifier – EPH) also referred to as the Airport, to address the airport's needs for the next twenty years. The Airport Master Plan will provide specific guidance in making the improvements necessary to maintain a safe and efficient airport that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.



### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of the Ephrata Municipal Airport - Airport Master Plan is to define the current, short-term, and long-term needs of the airport through a comprehensive evaluation of facilities, conditions, and FAA airport planning and design standards. The study will also address elements of local planning (land use, transportation, environmental, economic development, etc.) that have the potential to affect the planning, development, and operation of the airport. FAA Advisory Circular 150/5070-6B "Airport Master Plans" defines the specific requirements and evaluation methods established by FAA for the study. This project will update and replace the existing 2004 FAA-funded airport master plan for Ephrata Municipal Airport.

### **Project Need**

Ephrata Municipal Airport is included in the federal airport system—the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Inclusion in the NPIAS is limited to public use airports that meet specific FAA activity thresholds. There are currently (2016) 3,331 existing NPIAS facilities including airports, heliports, and seaplane bases.<sup>1</sup> The FAA recognizes that NPIAS airports are vital to serving the air transportation

<sup>1</sup> 2015-2019 National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems.

needs of the public and that access to the nation's air transportation system is not limited to commercial service airports.

The primary division for NPIAS airports is "Primary" and "Non-primary." The 389 Primary airports account for fewer than 12 percent of all NPIAS airports, but provide the majority of commercial air service within the system. The 2,942 Non-primary airports include General Aviation, Reliever, and Non-primary Commercial Service airports (airports that enplane 2,500 to 10,000 annual passengers). Additional designations reflect the airport's functional (asset) role (e.g., national, regional, local, basic) and service level (e.g., commercial, reliever, general aviation).

Ephrata Municipal Airport has the following NPIAS classification/designation according to the current (2015-2019) NPIAS report:

- Category: Non-Primary
- Asset Role: Local
- Service Level: General Aviation

NPIAS airports are eligible for federal funding of eligible improvements through FAA programs such as the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). However, to maintain funding eligibility, the FAA requires airports to periodically update their Airport Layout Plans to address changing conditions. These updates also provide an opportunity for both the Sponsors and FAA to maintain current planning consistent with applicable FAA technical standards, policies, and regulations that change over time.

This project updates the 2004 Ephrata Municipal Airport Master Plan. Since the last master plan, the FAA has identified several areas of emphasis for airports that affect airport planning. These include land use compatibility in runway protection zones (RPZ) and complex airfield geometry (collocated thresholds, intersecting runways, runway or taxiway hot spots, etc.). The FAA has directed airports to undertake further evaluation of these areas within the master planning process and identify options to mitigate any deficiencies.

## **Project Funding**

Funding for the Airport Master Plan Update is provided through an FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant (90%) and a Washington State Department of Transportation grant (5%) with a local match (5%) provided by the Port of Ephrata. The AIP is a dedicated fund administered by FAA with the specific purpose of maintaining and improving the nation's public use airports. The AIP is funded exclusively through general aviation and commercial aviation user fees and the funds can only be used for projects identified as eligible within the Airport Improvement Program.

## **Airport Ownership**

The Port of Ephrata is the owner and operator of the Ephrata Municipal Airport (EPH). As the airport owner (sponsor) of record, the Port is responsible for conforming to all applicable FAA regulations, design standards, and grant assurances.

## **History of the Airport and Development**

The airfield was established in 1939 as the Ephrata Army Air Base and was initially used as a support facility for area bombing and gunnery ranges. The airfield was transferred to the Fourth Air Force in 1940 where B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers trained. The airfield was later reassigned to the Second Air Force when the heavy bomber training was reassigned to that command. The airfield was also used as an aircraft maintenance and supply depot by the Air Technical Service Command.

In late 1945 the airfield closed and was turned over to the War Assets Administration to be disposed of. The facility was transferred by the War Assets Administration to Grant County and subsequently developed as a civilian airport.

## **Study Organization**

Work in progress on the Airport Master Plan Update was documented in a series of technical memoranda (presented as draft chapters). These chapters were prepared to document progress in the study; facilitate the review of preliminary results; and obtain input throughout the master planning process. The draft chapters were updated and incorporated into the draft and final Airport Master Plan technical report at the study's conclusion.

The draft chapters and supporting documents were prepared over a period of approximately 18 months. Each draft chapter was reviewed locally and by the FAA and Washington State Department of Transportation – Aviation Division (WSDOT) for consistency with federal and state regulations, policies, and standards.

The 2016-2036, Ephrata Municipal Airport Master Plan includes the following chapters:

- *Chapter 1 – Introduction and Project Overview*
- *Chapter 2 – Inventory of Existing Conditions*
- *Chapter 3 – Aviation Activity Forecasts*
- *Chapter 4 – Facility Requirements*
- *Chapter 5 – Airport Development Alternatives*
- *Chapter 6 – Airport Layout and Terminal Area Plans*
- *Chapter 7 – Airport Land Use Compatibility*

- *Chapter 8 – Airport Financial Plan and Capital Improvement Plan*
- *Chapter 9 – FAA Compliance Issues and Recycling and Solid Waste Management Plan*
- *Environmental Technical Memorandum*

## **Local Citizen Participation**

The Port of Ephrata is committed to an inclusive, transparent planning process and made all project work products available for public review. The public involvement element of the Airport Master Plan Update provided several ways for all interested individuals, organizations, or groups to participate in the project.

First, all draft work products were available for public review and comment. Links to the documents were posted on the Port's webpage to allow for convenient access, review, and comment. Copies of the draft work products were also available for public review and comment at the Port's offices throughout the course of the study. Comment forms were available for both electronic and printed versions of the draft work products.

Second, a series of public meetings were held during the project to facilitate public participation. The public meetings included periodic study sessions and briefings with Port staff and separate project meetings and open houses. The project team presented information, provided updates on study progress, and identified upcoming decision points during these meetings. A variety of tools were used to encourage citizen participation, including surveys, project newsletters, and project updates posted on the Port's webpage.

Third, a local planning advisory committee (PAC) was formed by the Port of Ephrata to assist the project team in reviewing draft technical working papers and to provide input into the planning process. The composition of the PAC was intended to provide an effective blend of community members including representatives of the Port Commission, the Airport Advisory Committee, airport users, neighbors, local businesses, local government representatives, and other interests. Representatives from the FAA Seattle Airports District Office and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) served as ex officio members of the PAC. The PAC met throughout the project, provided review and comment on draft work products, discussed key project issues, and provided local knowledge and expertise to the planning process.

The PAC meetings were open to the public; however, since the meetings were organized as work sessions, the time allocated for public comment was limited. Expanded public comment periods were provided in the public meetings that coincide with specific PAC meetings to ensure that all interested stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in the project.

## **Summary**

The FAA-defined airport master planning process requires a sequential, systematic approach, which led to the selection of a preferred airport development option. The preferred development option is integrated into the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP). To meet this goal, the Airport Master Plan Update:

- Provides an updated assessment of existing facilities and activity;
- Forecast airport activity measures (design aircraft, based aircraft, aircraft operations, etc.) for the current 20-year planning period;
- Examines previous planning recommendations (2004 Airport Master Plan) as appropriate, to meet the current and projected airport facility needs, consistent with FAA airport design standards;
- Determines current and future facility requirements for both demand-driven development and conformance with FAA design standards;
- Provides consistency between airport planning and land use planning/zoning to promote maximum compatibility between the airport and surrounding areas;
- Prepares an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP) drawing set to accurately reflect current conditions and master plan facility recommendations;
- Develops an Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) that prioritizes improvements and estimates project development costs and funding eligibility for the 20-year planning period; and
- Evaluates airport sponsor compliance with FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant assurances.



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