



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: Program Guidance Letter 15-1
Airport Layout Plan (ALP) Updates and
Airports GIS Surveys

Date: August 7, 2015


From: Director, Office of Airport Planning and
Programming, APP-1

Reply to Nancy S. Williams, APP-501
Attn. of:

To: PGL Distribution List

This Program Guidance Letter (PGL) provides interim update and clarification of FAA Order 5100.38D (“Airport Improvement Program Handbook”), regarding two types of work:

- Updating Airport Layout Plans (ALPs); and
- Conducting airport surveys that comply with the technical requirements of Airports GIS.

It also clarifies that Airport GIS surveying as a stand-alone project or as part of a state/metropolitan system planning project is not eligible.

Preparation of Airport Layout Plan (ALP) updates

The term “Master Plan” is a term of art, and means different things to different organizations and individuals. Within the FAA, the term may refer to a Master Plan, a Master Plan Update, or other planning study where the primary deliverable is an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP)—as long as the update is focused on future development needs of the airport (as opposed to simply updating it to reflect previous changes and/or existing conditions, which is not eligible).

Table E-2 (“Planning Project Requirements”) outlines the types of planning work that can be funded using AIP funds under the term “Master Plan.” In particular, row C says (in pertinent part) that:

The needs of airports differ in as many ways as there are airports. Although similar airports with similar roles may share common characteristics, master planning looks at the specific needs and assets at the airport in question. Not all airports need to do all of the elements identified in the current version of Advisory Circular 150/5070-6, Airport Master Plans. In some cases, a narrative report and an ALP update may suffice.

What this means is that the FAA can provide AIP funds for an ALP update as long as the resulting ALP identifies the airport’s future needs (as opposed to simply reflecting previous changes and/or existing conditions), and as long as the resulting ALP meets the FAA’s established standards and requirements, including an accompanying narrative report.

Conducting Surveys for Airports Geographic Information System (Airports GIS)

Table 3-48 (“Circumstances Where GIS Data Collection Costs are Allowable”) lists the circumstances under which data collection costs are allowable, and one of those circumstances is “The scope of the data collection is directly required by a specific AIP-funded project or master planning project, and the collection of the data is required to complete the project.”

Because a planning study is expected to result in an FAA-approved ALP that reflects future conditions for the entire airport, the scope of the grant may include Airports GIS-compliant surveying for the entire airport consistent with the FAA’s established surveying standards for Airports GIS—regardless of whether the airport sponsor chooses to characterize the planning study as a Master Plan or Master Plan Update, or some other type of planning study.

In extraordinary circumstances, a planning study may be conducted in phases, in which case it is permissible to include the full-airport survey work in a Phase 1 planning grant—i.e., a grant whose scope does not include the final Master Plan or ALP documents. However, in such cases, the grant must include a special condition stating that:

If the Airports GIS survey is not reflected on an updated ALP that meets FAA requirements within four (4) years from the date of the Phase 1 grant (regardless of whether it is generated using the AGIS/eALP system or through some other computer-aided design platform), then the sponsor may be required to repay that portion of the grant that relates to the survey work.

State or metropolitan system planning studies are used to study the performance and interaction of an entire aviation system in a specific geographic area. As such, AIP-funded system planning grants may not generally include whole-airport surveys.