

US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
EASTERN REGION

RECORD OF DECISION

FOR

EAST END ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS STATEMENT/
SECTION 4(f) STATEMENT

LaGUARDIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
QUEENS COUNTY, NEW YORK

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) presents the potential environmental impacts and other relevant factors considered by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) concerning whether to approve the Federal action needed for the proposed construction of the LaGuardia International Airport (LGA) East End Roadway reconfiguration project (the Project). The proposed Project is sponsored by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (the Port Authority) and was selected by the FAA as the environmentally preferred alternative from among the alternatives it considered.

The FAA as the Lead Federal Agency, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) as the Lead State Agency, has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Section 4(f) Statement (4(f)) for the Project. The Port Authority, acting as sponsor, proposes a roadway reconfiguration that effectively and efficiently improves vehicular access to the East End of LGA, reducing travel times and vehicle miles traveled. The FEIS/4(f) was prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, 40 CFR 1500, implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (United States Code, Title 49, Section 303(c)).

The ROD was prepared in accordance with the CEQ regulations. Subsequent to issuance of this ROD, the FAA intends to unconditionally approve the depiction of the project on the Port Authority's Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for LGA. This decision was based on the FEIS, which was approved on September 20, 1999, and became available to the public through a Notice of Availability published on October 8, 1999 in the *Federal Register*, and which is incorporated herein; the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/4(f), which became available to the public on June, 1994; other pertinent scientific and technical data which are referenced in the aforementioned documents, and are available to the public; and public comments on the proposal. As the Lead Federal Agency, the FAA has found that its action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in section 101(a) of NEPA.

As discussed in the Executive Summary of the FEIS/4(f), the development and approval of the FEIS/4(f) took several years longer than expected. However, we made a determination that it was appropriate for the base year for analysis to remain 1993 and the forecast year to remain 1998 (also referred to as "project implementation year"); the project implementation year is now expected to be approximately 2001. This determination was made in consideration of both the changes to the project analysis data and the LGA environment since the time the project was proposed; FAA concluded that based on these considerations the outcome of the project would not be altered.

A significant change to the LGA operational environment was a provision of the 2001 FAA Reauthorization Legislation, the Aviation Investment and Reform Act, known as Air-21, which removed slot restrictions, or the "high density rule," to promote competition and service to smaller airports. A result of this provision has been a significant increase (three-fold) in daily aircraft operations at LGA, with major delays with national airspace repercussions. On December 4, 2000 the FAA and the Port Authority held a lottery to reallocate exemption slots that were authorized under AIR-21. The purpose of the lottery was to limit hourly operations at LGA to 75, which was determined by the Port Authority to be the operational capacity of the airport, while still meeting the intent of the legislation, which is to promote competition among airlines and to provide service to small hub and non-hub airports.

The EIS impact analyses were based on 30 MAP (million annual passengers), which conservatively was expected to be attained in 2008. With the increased operations as a result of AIR-21 and the lottery, that number will be reached sooner. The Port Authority has indicated in its most recent MAP data that there were 25 MAP in 1999 at LGA and 26 MAP estimated for 2000, the year the slot restrictions were

removed. In light of this, the project implementation year is still below the analysis contained in the FEIS, and the data is still valid. Again, the roadway capacity will be reached sooner than 2008 as a result of AIR-21, which makes immediate implementation of this project imperative.

Although the implementation of the proposed project will significantly improve on-airport traffic, it is also likely to adversely affect components of local traffic off-airport, described below, including removal of a pedestrian bridge and deterioration of Level of Service (LOS) at some intersections. The Port Authority does not have jurisdiction to implement measures to mitigate these effects. Rather, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) has jurisdiction. As described in the attached table (Attachment 1) prepared by the Port Authority on August 21, 2000, the Port Authority is committed to cooperating with the NYCDOT to support the appropriate measures that will minimize or compensate for the adverse effects of the project.

II. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the project is to improve the service levels on the airport roadways serving the terminals at the East End of LGA Airport. These improvements are necessary to enable the existing roadway system to accommodate a shift in on-airport traffic which has occurred as a consequence of the increased use of the East End of the airport -- particularly due to the new and expanded terminals serving Delta and US Airways.

The existing passenger terminal facilities at the East End of LGA were built as a series of expansions, with the Delta Terminal becoming operational in 1982 and the US Airways and US Airways Shuttle Terminals becoming operational in 1993. These expansions were necessary to address requirements of the modern airline industry, both for independent terminal space and for gates designed to handle larger aircraft. The terminals at the East End of LGA now serve more than 50 percent of all LGA Airport passengers. By comparison, the Central Terminal Building handles only 40 percent of the passenger volume. Although significant improvements have been made to the roadway system to accommodate the new terminals, the East End terminals rely on access designed to serve the Central Terminal Building. Consequently, routes to and from the East End terminals are circuitous and confusing to travelers. In its efforts to maintain service levels at the airport, the Port Authority has implemented a series of Traffic Systems Management (TSM) techniques. These include:

- The establishment of a new road pattern that enabled combining Lots 4A & 4B into one lot, thereby eliminating curves and traffic signals.
- Installation of a new volume-density actuated traffic signal at the weave on the eastbound road behind Lot 4 where the departure ramp from US Airways enters the circulation roadway.
- Construction of a direct entrance roadway to the garage from 94th Street to minimize traffic circulating on frontage roadways.
- Establishment of new taxi stacks at the Central Terminal Building and at Delta to minimize backups and conflicting movements.
- Elimination of parking meters in Lot 4 to eliminate conflicts from vehicles entering the through-traffic stream from metered areas.
- Installation of a color-coded directional signing system to speed decision-making and minimize lost vehicles.
- Timing adjustments to traffic signals at the US Airways Terminal on both the inner and outer roadways to minimize conflicts and maximize roadway capacity.
- Installation of diversion signing on the GCP eastbound to the 94th Street exit to provide information on the most direct entrance to parking garage.

- Installation of fifty variable message signs to direct patrons to nearest available parking.

The need for the proposed improvements has been determined through traffic surveys and the application of a computer-based transportation model (TransCAD) that has been developed by the Port Authority to monitor and evaluate conditions on the internal airport roadway network. In order to gauge and maintain adequate landside operations at LGA, the Port Authority has established a range of acceptable roadway service levels, corresponding to Levels of Service (LOS) A-C, as described in the *Highway Capacity Manual (Transportation Research Board Special Report 209)*. Whereas the *Highway Capacity Manual* defines LOS E as the limit of acceptable delay, the Port Authority considers LOS D unacceptable on roadways serving the airport due to the critical nature of the time element in air travel schedules. Given the time required to design and implement a project at LGA, as well as at other airports serving the New York Metropolitan area, the Port Authority has adopted LOS C as the service level that signals the planning of roadway improvements.

Traffic surveys and analysis of the internal airport roadway system using the TransCAD model identified 22 roadway links critical to East End access and egress. The location of these links are illustrated in Figure 1.A. The TransCAD model predicted that 17 existing roadway segments currently operate below the acceptable service range (LOS C) during the PM peak hour analyzed (5 - 6 PM). Furthermore, TransCAD model predictions indicate that by the earliest year for the project implementation (the project build year -1998), a year when the airport was expected to reach only 75 percent of its passenger capacity, 20 of the roadway segments utilized by vehicles related to East End terminal operations would function at LOS D or worse (see Table 1.1), despite the implementation of TSM techniques listed above.

It is important to note that the models predicted LGA passenger and physical capacities separately because of the disparity between the physical (operations) and passenger facilities. In this case, aircraft operations are limited by the runway configuration and other airside aspects of the airport, such as taxiways and gates, while the landside facilities, such as terminals and roadways, are able to accommodate more passengers that fly in and out of the airport.

The Port Authority proposes to address conditions on the internal roadway system by implementing a series of physical improvements designed to bring LOSs on the airport roadways to acceptable levels. The Proposed Action consists of a group of improvements designed to address the immediate need on roadways now operating below the acceptable range.

The TransCAD-based evaluation indicated that most of these roadway links would improve with the proposed project. It predicts that the improvements proposed in the first project phase would be effective in improving the existing service levels on some of the critical on-airport roadway links and in providing more direct airport egress to the westbound GCP. However, the improvements that are proposed and evaluated in the first-tier FEIS do not address all the needed improvements to the internal airport roadway system. While the improvements would provide for the near-term and some of the long-term needs at the East End of the airport, projections indicate that, as the airport begins to reach its capacity, service levels will erode at several additional locations. Areas in the airport where service levels are expected to degrade include the East End roadway loop near 102nd Street and the route from the existing flyover to and including the Parking Lot 3 south roadway.

To address these potential service level reductions, a second flyover from the eastbound GCP (as an independent structure or, alternatively, as a branch from the existing flyover) has been tested under various future traffic scenarios using the TransCAD model. These tests indicate that a second or expanded flyover would benefit the portion of the network that would incur service level deterioration as the airport nears capacity, and provide enhanced access from the eastbound GCP. A preliminary modeling evaluation of the airport roadways at full capacity indicates that an independent flyover would improve at least two additional critical roadway links.

The precise level-of-service reduction and the year at which Phase II improvements would be needed are difficult to predict due to several factors, including the continued refinements to airport growth projections, uncertainty about the future directional split of airport traffic.

III. BACKGROUND

The LGA East End Roadway Improvements Project is being undertaken to improve existing and future service levels on the roadway system serving the new East End terminals. Existing levels of service on the airport internal roadways have deteriorated as use of the East End of the airport has increased. Passenger volume at the East End of LGA is currently greater than fifty percent of the total airport volume, as compared to 29 percent in 1987. Eighteen of 22 roadway links serving the East End terminals are now operating at unacceptable levels of service during peak traffic periods. Roadway improvements to address this immediate need have been identified, and constitute the Proposed Action considered in the FEIS/Final 4(f) Statement. Improvements to address long-term circulation needs of the airport, including enhanced access from the eastbound GCP, will be identified after additional study demonstrates their need, and would be the subject of a second-tier EIS. The FEIS presents the results of a detailed study of the effect of the Proposed Action on the environment in the project implementation year (1998) and ten years after it is constructed (2008). However, the project implementation year has been moved back to 2001.

Annual passenger volume at the airport increased by 15 percent from 19.6 million annual passengers in 1993 to 22.5 million annual passengers in 1998. The adverse effect of this increase in passenger volume on airport roadway service levels would be mitigated through implementation of the Proposed Action. While the Proposed Action is considered adequate to address the immediate and foreseeable needs at the East End terminal roadways, additional studies are needed to identify improvements that would address potential long-term growth at the airport. The FEIS identifies the concepts that have been explored to date to meet these long-term needs. Due to runway configuration constraints, the capacity of LGA is estimated to be 30.5 million passengers per year. The year 2008 analysis conducted for the FEIS considers a full-capacity airport. Previous peaks in the use of the airport (24 million air passengers in 1986 and 1987) have corresponded to high points in the economy. The timing of future improvements at the airport will depend on the rate at which passenger volume increases. When this will occur and to what degree the increases in passenger volume will affect the airport roadway service levels vary depending on fluctuations in the business cycle and the actual effectiveness of future projects, such as improvements that may be proposed as a result of the ongoing LGA Subway Access Study (LASAS) by the Federal Transit Administration and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Additional actions may be proposed when a clear need is demonstrated. And as noted above, a second-tier EIS would be prepared for the proposed actions.

IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Two build alternatives to the LGA East End Roadway Improvements Project have been studied in the DEIS and are included in the FEIS. The project was originally conceived as a single phase project that would optimize roadway function. The options to modify the roadway design were defined over a multi-year period based on studies of how landside operations were changing with the advent of the East End terminals. In identifying the alternatives to be considered in the EIS, the primary focus was to identify alternatives that could meet the project objectives and would minimize the potential adverse environmental effects of the project, as identified during scoping sessions and meetings with the community. Constraints imposed by the location of existing crossings of the GCP limited the design options for specific project elements at the 102nd Street Bridge. These features (Ramps E, F, G and H) became common elements to all project alternatives. The controversial means of providing access to the airport—a second flyover of the GCP from the eastbound lanes of the GCP—was the project variable that ultimately governed the development of the alternatives. Consequently, the two alternatives that were developed differed from each other in the way they proposed to provide access from the eastbound GCP.

In response to the community concern that the flyover should not be constructed until a year in which the need could be demonstrated, a process of tiering the EIS was initiated to enable certain necessary activities to proceed while the longer range elements of the project could be studied further and at a later date. These Phase I elements are evaluated in this first tier document together with a No Action scenario. Phases of the project were carefully defined so that Phase I activities would in no way prejudice a decision on either alternative flyover concept. Although the complete program to improve the airport roadway system has not been defined at a level of detail sufficient for inclusion in the FEIS, broad concepts have been explored, and additional elements that may be proposed in Phase II have been identified and evaluated to determine their compatibility with the Proposed Action.

The LGA East End Roadway Improvements Project was originally proposed as the Second Grand Central Parkway/LGA Flyover and Associated Ingress/Egress Ramps and Roadway Improvements Project when it was introduced to the public in 1993. At that time the project consisted of a set of roadway modifications designed to meet both long- and short-term needs for improved service levels on roadways serving the East End terminals. The project included the physical elements of what is now the Proposed Action, together with the improvements considered necessary to provide a more direct, less circuitous access from the eastbound GCP to the East End terminals at LGA. The principal means of achieving this was through the construction of a series of ramps at the 102nd Street Bridge designed to provide more efficient egress from the East End terminals to the westbound GCP and a second flyover from the eastbound GCP directly to the East End terminal loop. It was estimated that the additional flyover would be effective at reducing travel time to the East End of the airport, as well as enhancing capacity on the portions of the roadway network now used by East End terminal traffic.

Three alternative concepts for providing access to the airport from the eastbound GCP were under consideration at the time the first public scoping meeting was held in September 1993. Two scoping sessions and an interagency coordination meeting were held in September and October 1993 to provide public and regulatory officials with the opportunity to identify issues and concerns they believed should have been addressed in the FEIS. Comments received at this and subsequent scoping meetings and meetings with elected officials included suggestions that:

- The flyover component be moved as far north as possible to reduce the potential for conflict with the neighboring communities.
- Maintenance of acceptable on-airport roadway service levels may be achievable without an additional flyover, since improvement to the airport service levels may be achieved in part by the LASAS.

In response to public comments, additional alternatives that limited construction activity to areas north of the GCP median were developed and presented to the community and elected officials. In addition, TransCAD analyses of the on-airport traffic network using traffic data collected for the project, recent license plate surveys, and information about the LASAS were completed in an attempt to determine the date when each project element would be necessary.

Results of the studies indicate that the roadway improvements at the 102nd Street Bridge are necessary to alleviate existing congestion levels. However, eastbound flyover capacity would be adequate to meet airport demand in the near future. Analyses of a full-capacity airport scenario indicated an eventual need for additional capacity at the flyover, even with benefits derived from the LASAS. As a result, the project was divided into two distinct phases. The first phase of these improvements is the Proposed Action considered in the FEIS.

A DEIS/Section 4(f) Statement was prepared describing the purpose and need for the project, existing conditions, and the environmental impacts and benefits of the project compared with future conditions without the proposed project. The DEIS was circulated in December, 1995, as indicated in the Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register on December 6, 1995. The general public was offered the

opportunity to review and comment on the DEIS during the public review process. This process included a public hearing, a public meeting and a public comment period.

The public hearing was held on January 10, 1996, and the public meeting to supplement the public hearing was held on January 31, 1996. Statements were made by 17 speakers, some of whom also provided written comments. The public comment period, which began December 6, 1995 was extended by the FAA and NYSDOT to March 4, 1996. During this period, 12 letters from federal, state, and local agencies and individuals were received by the FAA regarding the DEIS. The comments and corresponding responses are included in Chapter XIII of the FEIS.

In addition to providing responses to comments, the FEIS includes revisions to address changes that have occurred since the initiation of the EIS process in 1993 which have relevance to the environmental impacts that were disclosed in the document and commented on by the public.

Based on the minimal effect of these changes on the impact levels previously disclosed to the public for this project, FAA has determined that the FEIS could be issued, and supports decision making on the project.

V. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Proposed Action includes the construction of four new ramp connections: Ramps E, F, G and H (see Figure II.A of the FEIS):

- **Ramp E** would carry outbound traffic of the upper-level roadway at the US Airways Terminal to the westbound lanes of the Grand Central Parkway (GCP) via a new ramp structure just west of, and parallel to, the 102nd Street Bridge.
- **Ramp F** would carry outbound traffic from the 102nd Street Bridge to merge with Ramp E before the new entrance to the GCP westbound lanes.
- **Ramp G** would provide direct entrance from the 102nd Street Bridge to the eastbound on-airport road leading to the upper and lower levels of the East End terminals.
- **Ramp H** would provide direct exit from the upper-level roadway of the US Airways terminal to the 102nd Street Bridge.

In addition, access to the 102nd Street Bridge from the lower-level loop road would be improved by construction of an at-grade connection north of Ramp H. The 102nd Street Bridge access road would be widened in the vicinity of the US Airways Terminal building to accommodate a directional change in traffic. Inbound (northbound) traffic would be diverted to Ramp G and directly onto the East End roadway loop. The 102nd Street Bridge, as it extends north of Ramp G, would become one-way in the outbound (southbound) direction.

To accommodate the construction of Ramps E and F, the existing westbound GCP service road would be relocated approximately 40 feet (one bay) to the north at the 102nd Street Bridge. To satisfy American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) roadway design criteria, and to provide an adequate acceleration lane for the merging traffic off the new entrance ramp, the westbound mainline GCP would be shifted six feet toward the median between the new westbound entrance ramp and the 94th Street Bridge, and the GCP westbound entrance ramp from the 94th Street Bridge would be widened (see FEIS Figure 11.A). No roadway improvements are proposed to the south of the existing GCP median. The eastbound lanes of the GCP would remain in their existing location. Direct access from the East End terminals to the GCP, provided by the proposed improvements, would eliminate the need for the airport road entrance ramp to the GCP service road. This ramp would be closed.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

The FEIS examined 19 areas of potential environmental impact: aircraft noise, land use, social, induced socioeconomic, air quality, water quality, wildlife refuge and parkland, historic and archaeological, farmland, biotic communities, endangered and threatened species, wetlands, floodplain, coastal resources and management, energy supply and natural resources, light emissions, solid waste, hazardous materials and environmental contamination, and construction. Conclusions related to various potentially adverse environmental impact areas are presented below. Impacts of the Proposed Action would be limited to effects on parklands, pedestrian circulation, intersection capacity, and visual quality. Community noise levels would not change. A thorough analysis of these impacts is presented in the FEIS.

Parkland

The Proposed Action would require the use of approximately 60,000 square feet of parkway embankment adjacent to the airport. Although not accessible to the public, the parkway right-of-way is part of the New York City park system and provides a visual amenity to those traveling near the airport. This impact is unavoidable, as all connections to the GCP would have to traverse the adjacent parkland. Impacts on this visual amenity could be partly moderated by enhanced landscaping in the remaining portion of the GCP adjacent to the airport.

Use of the parkland must be in accordance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (United States Code, Title 49, Section 303(c)), which states that the use of any Section 4(f) property cannot be approved for transportation use unless it is determined that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to using the land, and that the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the affected property. A Section 4(f) Statement is prepared when a federally-funded or federally-administered transportation project proposes using land from a publicly owned park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or historic site of national, state, or local significance. Use of parkland for the Proposed Action is unavoidable and preparation of a Section 4(f) statement is required. With this in mind, the EIS/4(f) serves as both an EIS pursuant to NEPA and as a Section 4(f) document; the 4(f) Statement is provided as Chapter VIII of the FEIS.

The 4(f) statement assesses the Proposed Action's potential impacts on the parkway embankment adjacent to LGA, which is part of the GCP transportation facility, technically designated parkland under the New York City park system. Although the Proposed Action would result in parkland taking, the taking does not constitute a significant active open space impact, as the property was acquired for park or parkway use, and the construction of ramps to the parkway and its widening are generally consistent with the intended use of the property. The 4(f) statement documents that alternatives to providing parkway access would not reduce existing roadway impacts. The project seeks to minimize impacts to parkland by the following:

- discontinuing an existing ramp and the rehabilitation of the property as parkland; and,
- constructing the ramps crossing the parkway right-of-way on structure, rather than on fill.

The project would not use land from any historic site of national, state, or local significance or from a publicly owned recreation area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge. To be consistent with the intent of the parkway corridor, which was to enhance travelers' experience and buffer surrounding uses from the roadway, a landscape plan to enhance the remaining and reclaimed landscape will be developed in coordination with New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR).

Pedestrian Access

Construction of egress ramps from the 102nd Street Bridge to the GCP will interrupt the sidewalk on the west side of the bridge, which is currently used by approximately 33 pedestrians in the peak hour. With

construction of the project, traffic volumes that would use Ramp F are predicted to exceed 700 vehicles in the peak hour and would conflict with pedestrian movements, resulting in an impact to safety if the bridge remained open to pedestrian traffic. The impact to the sidewalk is unavoidable, as ramp connections to move 102nd Street Bridge traffic directly into the GCP would necessarily disrupt the sidewalk. Although a pedestrian-activated signal could mitigate this impact, it would reduce service levels on the East End roadways and would not be consistent with the purpose of the Proposed Action. Therefore, in order to more appropriately mitigate this impact, a replacement pedestrian walkway would have to be constructed on the east side of Ramp G. The Port Authority will coordinate with the New York City Department of Transportation and recommend that the replacement walkway be constructed.

Intersection Capacity

Vehicular traffic conditions in 1998 at the intersection of 94th Street and 23rd Avenue were expected to deteriorate from LOS D under the No Action to LOS E with the Proposed Action during peak travel periods. Unacceptable levels of service at the intersection are associated with the southbound approach, which is predicted to operate at LOS F. All other approaches at this intersection would operate at LOS A or B. Shifting green time to the southbound phase could effectively mitigate this impact. Therefore, the Port Authority will recommend to the NYCDOT that, once the NYCDOT determines that the LOS has deteriorated with the proposed action, the green time be shifted accordingly.

The LOS F predicted at the intersection of 94th Street and 23rd Avenue in the 2008 No Action would continue during all three peak traffic periods. However, average delays would worsen in the Build condition. The most severe case would occur during the PM peak, where over-saturation (traffic volumes in excess of capacity) is predicted. At this intersection, an additional lane would be required on the southbound approach of 94th Street to accommodate right-turning vehicles from an exclusive turning lane to provide satisfactory mitigation. The Port Authority will coordinate with the NYCDOT and recommend that an additional lane be constructed for right-turning vehicles.

Under No Action, the intersection of 94th Street and Astoria Boulevard was predicted to degrade from LOS D to LOS E in the AM peak, and to worsen to LOS F in the PM peak in 2008. Currently, there is only one lane in each direction of 94th Street. An additional lane in both directions of 94th Street to allow through traffic to bypass turning vehicles in queue would successfully mitigate the project's impacts. This widening can be accomplished by the elimination of curbside parking and widening the roadway. Shifting green time from the Astoria Boulevard phase to 94th Street is possible and may also be required. The Port Authority will coordinate with the NYCDOT and recommend that these changes be made.

The project will provide direct and efficient connections between the East End Terminals and the GCP and the 102nd Street Bridge to alleviate existing and future projected congestion levels on the East End roadways. The improvements would consist of four new ramps, with the limited number of access points to the 102nd Street Bridge from the East End roadways determining the placement of the each ramp. The direct access from the East End Terminals to the GCP provided by the proposed improvements would eliminate the need for the airport road entrance ramp to the GCP service road. This ramp would be closed. Additionally, the 102nd Street viaduct between the airport and Ramp G would be changed from a two-way roadway to operate only in the southbound direction. These proposed Phase I improvements have been determined to be effective in addressing the immediate need to improve service levels on the airport roadways network.

Visual Impacts

The demolition of Hangar 6 in 1993 has opened a temporary view of Flushing Bay from the 102nd Street Bridge. However, the Port Authority anticipates the eventual construction of a replacement facility on this site. The construction of new Ramp E would impact the temporary view that travelers using the 102nd

Street Bridge now have. This visual impact is considered minor, because the view of Flushing Bay from the Bridge is temporary and already partially interrupted by existing airport service hangars.

Compatible Land Use

The project would not infringe on land use areas surrounding the airport. Consistent with community concerns expressed during the public outreach period, all proposed improvements would take place north of the median of the GCP. As access to the GCP would be improved by the Proposed Action, the project is consistent with NYS DOT plans for the Parkway. Further, the Proposed Action would consist of improvements designed to address conditions on the internal roadway system of LGA that have been identified by the Port Authority, thereby supporting the operations and viability of LGA, a facility type consistent with the area's current M1-1 zoning designation. As a "water-dependent use," LGA is consistent with New York City's Coastal Zone Management Plan (CMP). Finally, through coordination with the New York City Department of City Planning and Port Authority planners, efforts have been made to identify and factor into the future conditions all foreseeable projects whose effects would be evident in the study area.

Water Quality

Estimated increases in peak runoff from drainage areas associated with the project would not result in a significant impact on the operation of existing drainage systems. The proposed project would not result in any significant changes in chloride concentrations in roadway runoff (potential impacts from deicing chemicals used for the GCP and on-airport roadways), or concentrations of automobile-related pollutants in highway runoff at either of the affected discharge points into Flushing Bay. The effect of the Proposed Action on groundwater is expected to be minimal.

Air Quality

Analyses contained in the EIS indicated that the project would reduce area-wide emissions by providing a more direct and effective roadway system at the East End. In addition, based on micro-scale analyses, no significant localized impacts were identified.

VII. MITIGATION

Parkland

The Proposed Action would require the use of approximately 60,000 square feet of parkway embankment adjacent to the airport. Although not accessible to the public, the parkway right-of-way is part of the New York City park system and provides a visual amenity to those traveling near the airport. The original intended purpose of parkway corridors was to enhance the travelers experience and buffer surrounding uses from the roadway, as well as provide land for park and parkway use. This impact is unavoidable, however, as all connections to the GCP would have to traverse the adjacent parkland. Impacts on this visual amenity could be partly moderated by enhanced landscaping in the remaining portion of the GCP adjacent to the airport, and a landscape plan to enhance the remaining and reclaimed landscape will be developed in coordination with NYCDPR. Additionally, the project will minimize impacts to parkland by taking the following measures: discontinuing use of an existing ramp and the rehabilitation of the property as parkland; and constructing the ramps crossing the parkway right-of-way on structure, rather than on fill.

Intersection Capacity

The proposed project is likely to adversely affect components of local, off-airport traffic, including removal of a pedestrian bridge and deterioration of LOS at some intersections. The Port Authority does not have jurisdiction to implement measures to mitigate these effects. Rather, this resides with the NYCDOT. As described in Attachment 1, however, Port Authority is committed to cooperating with the NYCDOT to support the appropriate measures that will minimize or compensate for the adverse effects of the project.

Accordingly, the Port Authority shall make diligent efforts to coordinate with the NYCDOT to minimize and compensate for pedestrian and LOS impacts.

VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Comments were received at all stages of the EIS process. All comments received during development of the environmental documents were thoroughly considered and, in some cases, used in the analysis and discussion of specific impact areas. Methodologies were reviewed and commented on by the public and involved regulatory agencies prior to evaluation during public and agency scoping sessions. A summary of the comments received on the DEIS and FAA's analysis of the comments can be found in Section XIII of the FEIS; no comments were received on the FEIS.

Nearby communities have had the opportunity to express their views during the following meetings and workshops:

- Public Scoping Meetings: September 13, 1993 (East Elmhurst, New York); and, October 21, 1993 (East Elmhurst, New York)
- Community Information Meetings: October 14, 1993 (East Elmhurst, New York); September 21, 1995 (Jackson Heights, New York); October 1, 1995 (Flushing, New York); October 1, 1996 (Astoria, New York); October 11, 1996 (Jerome Hardeman Sr. Day Care Center)
- Agency (NYCDOT, EDC) Technical Review Meeting: November 5, 1993 (One Penn Plaza, New York, New York)
- Agency Meeting (OEC, DCP, NYCDOT): May 12, 1995 (One Penn Plaza, New York, New York)
- Interagency Scoping Meeting: September 17, 1993 (One World Trade Center, New York, New York)
- Information Meeting with Elected Officials: September 10, 1993 (Queens Borough Hall, Queens, New York); October 19, 1993 (Queens Borough Hall, Queens, New York); November 17, 1993 (Queens Borough Hall, Queens, New York), September 20, 1994 (Queens Borough Hall, Queens, New York)
- Public Hearing on the DEIS: January 10, 1996 (East Elmhurst, New York)
- Supplementary Meeting on the DEIS: January 31, 1996 (East Elmhurst, New York)

IX. AGENCY FINDINGS

The proposed Project is reasonably consistent with existing plans of public agencies for development of the area surrounding the airport (49 U.S.C. 47106).

The proposed Project has been planned in compliance with the provisions of Executive Order 12898 on Federal Actions to address Environmental Justice in minority and low income populations.

The proposed Project offers no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of 60,000 square feet of parkway embankment, which is part of the New York City park system. A US DOT Section 4(f) statement has been prepared as part of this EIS.

The FAA actions involved in the implementation of the Port Authority's LGA East End Roadway project include the following:

- A. The FAA must make a determination under 14 CFR Part 157 (49 U.S.C. 40113) as to whether or not it objects to the proposed Project from an airspace perspective, based upon aeronautical studies.
- B. The FAA must make a determination under 14 CFR Part 77 regarding potential obstructions to navigable airspace resulting from equipment deployed during construction.
- C. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 40103, the FAA must determine whether aircraft operational and/or air traffic control procedures will be needed to accommodate the proposed project.
- D. Pursuant to the requirements of 14 CFR Part 158, the FAA must make a determination regarding the use of Passenger Facility Charge for this Project.
- E. Other agency decisions necessary for this project to proceed to completion, any of which involve the FAA's Airport program, including airport certification (see 49 U.S.C. 44702, 14 CFR Part 139), airport security (see 14 CFR Part 107), airport layout plan approval (see 49 U.S.C. App. 47107), and environmental approval (see 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* and 40 CFR Part 1500 *et seq.*).

X. DECISION

The FAA recognizes its responsibility under NEPA, CEQ regulations and its own directives. Recognizing these responsibilities, I have carefully considered the objectives of the Proposed Project in relation to aeronautical and environmental factors at LaGuardia International Airport and utilized the environmental review process to make a more informed decision.

The environmental documents satisfy the requirements of NEPA, the Airport and Airway Improvement Act, and FAA Orders 1050.1D and 5050.4A.

Having carefully considered aviation safety and the operational objectives of the proposed project, as well as being properly advised as to the anticipated environmental impacts of the proposed action, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I find that the project is reasonably supported, and I, therefore, direct that the action be taken to carry out the agency actions noted above.

Recommended:

Robert B. Mendez
Manager, Airports Division
Eastern Region

Date

Approved:

Arlene B. Feldman
Regional Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Eastern Region

Date

This Decision, including any subsequent actions necessary for certification of airspace determination, unconditional approval of the Airport Layout Plan and/or a determination regarding the use of Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) funds to finance the project, are taken pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 40101 *et seq.*, and constitute orders of the Administrator which are subject to review by the courts of appeals of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 46110(a).