Environmental Assessment
Draft
Runway 17-35 Activation

Prepared For:

FLY XNA National Airport
Northwest Arkansas
April 2020

GarverUSA.com
Preparer’s Certification

I hereby certify that this Environmental Assessment for the Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) was prepared by Garver under my direct supervision for the Northwest Arkansas National Airport Authority.

Prepared by: Garver, LLC

Prepared for: Northwest Arkansas National Airport Authority

This Environmental Assessment becomes a Federal document when evaluated and signed by the responsible FAA official.

Responsible FAA Official

Date
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1.0 Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

This Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared per Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Order 5050.4B, FAA Order 1050.1F, and the FAA Environmental Desk Reference for Airport Actions involving the designation of a parallel taxiway at the Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA or Airport) to active Runway 17-35. The resumes for the preparers of the Draft EA are found in Appendix A.

Northwest Arkansas National Airport is a public use airport located southwest of the City of Bentonville, Arkansas just north of State Highway 264. Figure 1 shows the Airport’s location in the region and proximity to other airports in the surrounding cities. The Airport is owned and operated by the Northwest Arkansas Airport Authority and is approximately 2,225 acres in size. The primary use runway at XNA is Runway 16-34 (ultimate Runway 16L-34R), which is an 8,801-foot by 150-foot concrete runway with a full parallel taxiway. The parallel taxiway considered for designation to Runway 17-35 (ultimate Runway 16R-34L) is an 8,800-foot by 150-foot combination concrete/asphalt taxiway. Refer to Figure 2 for the XNA Airport Diagram.

Figure 1: Site Location Map
Figure 2: XNA Airport Diagram and Proposed Action
1.2 Purpose and Need

Designation of the parallel taxiway to active Runway 17-35 is needed to provide continuous operations for arrivals and departures during emergencies, maintenance, or when disabled aircraft cause temporary closure of Runway 16-34. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to designate the parallel taxiway to Runway 17-35 and activate it. For the purposes of activating Runway 17-35, 10% of all operations identified in the 2019 Terminal Area Forecasts (TAF) for XNA were assigned to the runway.

2.0 Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

Two alternatives were evaluated in this Draft EA; the Proposed Action, as shown in Figure 2, and the No Action alternative. The Proposed Action includes redesignating the taxiway as Runway 17-35 and publishing its status as an active runway. No construction activities are included as part of the Proposed Action except for minor pavement marking and signage changes required for the ultimate runway naming convention outlined in Section 1. Runway Protection Zones (RPZs) and avigation easements are already in place for Runway 17-35; therefore, there are no land use concerns. Activation of the runway will occur in accordance with 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 157 procedures.

2.2 No Action Alternative

Although the No Action Alternative will not meet the needs of the project, it is retained to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and maintain a baseline to allow for a comparison of impacts with the Proposed Action alternative. The No Action Alternative would leave the pavement as a parallel taxiway, which could induce negative socioeconomic impacts due to loss of service when Runway 16-34 is closed for reasons described in Section 1. No other environmental impacts are anticipated with this alternative.

3.0 Affected Environment

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the existing environment within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action. The APE contains 659 acres and is entirely on airport-owned property. Due to the nature of the Proposed Action in that there is no land disturbance, land use changes, or acquisition, the APE was determined based on the extents of the 65 decibel (dBA) day-night average sound level (DNL) noise contour. The entire APE, outside of the developed airfield, contains hay fields and wooded areas located on the airport and a small portion of hayfield located off the airport across State Highway 12 to the north. Refer to Figure 3 for aerial photography depicting the APE. The area surrounding the airport is rural in nature and contains natural drainage features and wooded and open areas with few residences in the immediate vicinity. A site visit was performed on January 30, 2020 to document the existing conditions of Runway 17-35 and environmental resources located within the APE that could be affected by the Proposed Action. A cursory review was also conducted within the surrounding airport property. Site photographs representing current conditions within the APE are provided on the following pages.
Photograph 1 – View of both south pavement ends at XNA. The parallel taxiway proposed for designation as Runway 17-35 is on the left and Runway 16-34 is on the right.
3.2 Agency Coordination

During project scoping, FAA determined that no state or federal agencies would need consulted as a result of the Proposed Action. FAA direction is provided in Appendix D. This decision was based on several factors, including no land acquisition or disturbance, limited number of environmental resources affected, and that the APE is almost completely located within airport-owned property.

3.3 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

The parallel taxiway proposed for designation and activation as Runway 17-35 was constructed in 2012, and the existing airfield configuration inside the airfield movement area (AMA) has remained unchanged since 2014 except for minor taxiway alignment changes. Projects that have occurred within the last 5 years at the airport include:

- Taxiway B Reconstruction (North)
- Taxiway M Construction
- Taxiway L Construction
- Terminal Apron Expansion (East)
- Parking Deck Construction
- Terminal Parking Expansion

In addition to the proposed conversion of the parallel taxiway to active Runway 17-35 under review in this Draft EA, reasonably foreseeable actions within the next five-year term may include the below-listed actions depicted in the Airport Layout Drawing (ALD) located in Appendix B, and identified in the Airport Capital...
Improvement Program (ACIP) through 2025. The ALD reflects the Proposed Action along with future improvements for XNA beyond those in the reasonably foreseeable future.

- Terminal Expansion
- Concourse B Expansion
- Taxiway B Reconstruction (South)
- Terminal Apron Expansion (West)

### 3.4 Environmental Resources Not Impacted

Environmental resources that are not impacted by the Proposed Action are not described in detail in this Draft EA or discussed further as a result of no impact determinations. The Proposed Action and No Action Alternative would not affect:

- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Climate
- Coastal resources
- DOT Section 4(f)
- Farmlands
- Hazardous materials, solid waste, and pollution prevention
- Historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources
- Land use
- Natural resources and energy supply
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice
- Visual resources/character
- Light emissions
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Surface waters
- Groundwater
- Wild and scenic rivers

### 3.5 Noise

Noise contours were generated using the FAA-approved Aviation Environmental Design Tool (AEDT) 3b Model program for determining potential noise-related impacts to the surrounding land uses. These contours were developed based on the yearly DNL for which FAA measures noise impacts. Five levels of contours ranging from DNL 55 dB to DNL 75 dB were developed for both the conversion of the parallel taxiway to Runway 17-35 and activation and future, 20-year conditions. Refer to Appendix C for results of the noise analysis. The FAA considers a DNL 65 dB noise contour as acceptable for residential developments per FAR Part 150.

The FAA also provides federal compatible land use guidelines for several land uses as a function of DNL values. FAA Order 5050.4B defines a noise sensitive area as “an area where noise interferes with the area’s typical activities or its uses”. Noise sensitive areas typically include residential homes, educational institutions, health care facilities, religious structures and sites, parks, recreational areas, areas with wilderness characteristics, wildlife refuges, and cultural and historical sites. There are no residential, educational, health, religious, parks, recreational areas, and wildlife refuges located within the DNL 65 dB for the future airport development. FAA orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B define a significant noise impact as one which would occur if the Proposed Action would cause noise-sensitive areas to experience an increase in noise of 1.5 dB or more at or above the DNL 65 dB noise contour when compared to a No Action alternative for the same time frame.
Operations defined in the 2019 TAF for XNA were split between the primary use runway (Runway 16-34) representing 90% of all operations and 10% of all operations assigned to Runway 17-35 for existing year and 20-year projected conditions.

4.0 Environmental Consequences and Mitigation

4.1 Introduction

This section is organized by resource topics with the impacts of the alternatives combined under resource headings. This section provides concise analysis of the potential impacts to resources identified in Section 3. This analysis, although brief, is a summary of in-depth evaluation of the respective resource impacts associated with the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative is retained to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and provide an environmental baseline for impact comparison.

4.2 Noise

The Proposed Action would expand the DNL 65 dB contour by approximately 43 acres to the west; however, noise impacts are not expected for any noise-sensitive areas as the entirety of the expanded DNL 65 dB contour is contained within Airport property. Figures in Appendix C show differentials between the No Action alternative and the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action does not exceed the threshold for cumulative noise impacts.

The Proposed Action DNL 65 dB noise contour at XNA does not exceed significance thresholds for noise impacts and noise compatible land use as defined in FAA Order 1050.1F, Section 4-3.3, Exhibit 4.1, Significance Determination for FAA Actions. As identified in Figure 4, the Proposed Action would not increase noise by DNL 1.5 dB or more for a noise sensitive area that is exposed to noise at or above the DNL 65 dB noise exposure level, or that will be exposed at or above the DNL 65 dB level due to a DNL 1.5 dB or greater increase, when compared to the No Action alternative for the same timeframe. The No Action alternative would not change the existing contours.

Figure 4: DNL 65 dB Noise Contour Comparison
4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects at the Airport were evaluated to determine the cumulative impacts on the environment as a result of these projects. These projects are identified in Section 3.3. Overall, cumulative impacts of the recent past and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the Proposed Action include minor increases in the overall DNL 65 dB noise contour over lands already impacted by the DNL 65 dB contour. Therefore, the Proposed Action will have only minor cumulative impacts on the surrounding natural or man-made environment. No adverse impacts are expected.

In addition to the projects identified in Section 3.3, although located outside the APE, a proposed State Highway is currently being planned within the immediate area south of the Airport. This highway is proposed to provide better traffic connectivity between major Interstates and the Airport and is being evaluated in a separate Environmental Assessment with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the lead federal agency. Because the Proposed Action will not affect ground transportation within and around the Airport, no cumulative effects on traffic, noise, or other environmental resources are anticipated.

A proposed future 9,000-foot runway is identified on the ALD; however, this action is considered outside the scope of a reasonably foreseeable future action. Additionally, aircraft that would use the activated Runway 17-35 can operate without the use of approaches or NAVAIDs.

5.0 Public Involvement

The Draft EA was completed in February 2020 and was prepared for public review and comment prior to advertising for the notice of opportunity to hold a Public Hearing. On April 8, 2020, the Northwest Arkansas Airport Authority opened the public comment period by placing advertisements in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, a newspaper of general circulation throughout Northwest Arkansas. A copy of the advertisement and affidavit of publication will be included in Appendix E of the Final EA. Hardcopies of the Draft EA are available for the public to review until May 7, 2020 at the Airport Terminal Building. Due to public health advisories in place at the time of publication, the FAA and Northwest Arkansas National Airport determined that the Draft EA would be made available electronically on Agency and Airport websites. The public would retain the right to request a public hearing and a physical copy of the Draft EA to be mailed to their home address for review.

6.0 Required Permits

No permits are required; however, the current Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) noting Runway 17-35 is closed to arrivals and departures would be canceled once the runway was open to operations.

7.0 Commitments

The Airport makes the following commitments as part of this Draft EA:

- The Airport will comply with all federal, state, and local floodplain regulations, Executive Orders, and permitting requirements as applicable to the Proposed Action.
APPENDIX A

Preparers and Qualifications
Ryan Mountain is a senior environmental scientist/specialist at Garver with 20 years of experience in environmental services and project management. His responsibilities include managing special environmental studies for Garver’s aviation team, including authoring and co-authoring NEPA documents; agency coordination; threatened and endangered species survey coordination; Phase I environmental site assessments; Section 404 permitting; wetland delineations; detailed wetland and stream mitigation planning and specifications; biological evaluations and habitat assessments; and preparing spill prevention and stormwater pollution prevention plans.

**EXPERIENCE**

- **MUHLENBERG COUNTY AIRPORT RUNWAY 06-24 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
  Greenville, KY
  Senior environmental scientist and co-author of a focused environmental assessment (EA) and full EA for two runway obstruction removal projects that also includes a state road relocation, terrain removal, property acquisition and a wildlife/perimeter security fence project. Responsibilities included coordination with the airport director; local, state and federal agencies; and consultant coordination for threatened and endangered species bat surveys, cultural historic properties and archaeological surveys. Additionally, served as the primary field biologist for completion of a wildlife hazard site visit (WHSV) and wetland delineation required by the FAA.

- **BENTONVILLE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT TURF RUNWAY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
  Bentonville, AR
  Senior Environmental Scientist that oversaw the completion of and was a co-author of an Environmental Assessment for this turf runway project that included coordination with the airport director and Garver’s aviation engineers and planners; and coordination with local, state and federal agencies.

- **AUGUSTA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
  Bentonville, AR
  Senior Environmental Scientist responsible for completing field surveys and assisting with the completion of a Wildlife Hazard Site Visit (WHSV) and Environmental Assessment. Responsibilities included coordination with the airport director; local, state and federal agencies; habitat evaluation; conducting point count surveys at predetermined locations around the airport; a spotlight survey; documenting wildlife habits, numbers and activities on and around the airport; habitat assessment and wildlife usage; identifying hazardous wildlife attractants on and around the airport; and assisting in recommendations for habitat management.
RYAN MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

- **CHILTON COUNTY AIRPORT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
  
  Clanton, AL
  
  Lead environmental scientist responsible for overall completion of and co-authoring an Environmental Assessment for a 1,000-foot major runway extension project. Responsibilities included environmental evaluation of several alternatives; site reconnaissance; assisting at the public hearing; and coordination with local, state, and federal agencies.

- **SOUTHWEST ALABAMA REGIONAL AIRPORT ESTABLISHMENT**
  
  Thomasville, AL
  
  Primary author and lead environmental scientist responsible for completing a NEPA environmental assessment (EA) through the Federal Aviation Administration for this new regional airport. Primary responsibilities included local, state, and federal agency coordination; interest group coordination; assistance at the Draft EA public hearing; wetland delineation on 973 acres; cursory wildlife and habitat observations at the proposed airport location and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coordination and approval.
CASSIE SCHMIDT
Environmental Scientist/Environmental Specialist

Cassie Schmidt is an environmental scientist on our Transportation Team with seven years of environmental data collection and assessment experience. She has knowledge of local, state, and federal environmental regulations and guidelines. Her experience includes conducting Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments; completing alternative analyses and functions and services assessments to satisfy Section 404 permitting requirements; and designing and drafting wetland and stream mitigation plans. Cassie’s responsibilities include co-authoring NEPA documents (including Environmental Assessments); conducting wetland and stream delineations and other environmental field investigations; preparing Section 404 permitting applications for Nationwide and Individual Permits, performing Initial Site Assessments; preparing biological evaluations for threatened and endangered species and for jurisdictional waters and wetlands; and assisting in preparing spill prevention control and countermeasure plans, stormwater pollution prevention plans, and sediment control plans. Additional responsibilities include collecting reconnaissance level environmental data in support of large-scale impact analyses; assisting with preliminary engineering studies; and coordinating with various federal, state, and local environmental agencies. In addition, Cassie is a permitted biologist with USFWS who has experience conducting surveys of the endangered American Burying Beetle, *Nicrophorus americanus*.

EXPERIENCE

MUHLENBERG COUNTY AIRPORT RUNWAY 06-24 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Greenville, KY

Environmental scientist responsible for preparing a Wildlife Hazard Site Visit report for the Muhlenberg county Airport, including exhibits. Conducted a wetland delineation for an additional study area within the west end of the runway approach and compiled the wetland delineation report including exhibits. Prepared a Short Form Environmental Assessment (appropriate NEPA documentation), which included a threatened and endangered species habitat assessment and effects determination, public notice advertisements, coordination of cultural and historic resource clearance with the State Historic Preservation Office, other agency coordination, and addressing Federal Aviation Administration comments. Prepared an Environmental Due Diligence Audit (EDDA) for land acquisition required for the proposed improvements.
○ **CHILTON COUNTY AIRPORT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
*Clanton, AL*

Environmental scientist responsible for researching and drafting the required NEPA document (an Environmental Assessment [EA] report) for this 1,000-foot runway extension and property acquisition project. The EA document included, but was not limited to analysis of the following natural and social environmental issues: air quality, noise quality, hazardous materials, wetlands and streams, water quality, farmlands, land use and land cover, terrestrial and aquatic communities, threatened and endangered species, economic impacts, community impacts, relocations, environmental justice and Title VI, recreational areas, archeological and historical resources, visual impacts, Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties, and secondary and cumulative impacts. Additionally, conducted property owner research, sent landowner notification letters, prepared and submitted threatened and endangered species habitat assessment and effects determinations to USFWS for project clearance, compiled alternative analysis matrices, and quantified impacts of the proposed project, as well as those of each feasible project alternative.

○ **CYNTHIANA-HARRISON COUNTY AIRPORT RUNWAY APPROACH OBSTRUCTION REMOVAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
*Cynthio, KY*

Environmental scientist responsible for researching and drafting the required NEPA document (an Environmental Assessment report) for the project. Responsibilities also included creating exhibits for these reports and coordinating with landowners regarding permission for property access.

○ **HENDERSON CITY-COUNTY AIRPORT RUNWAY EXTENSION AND ROAD RELOCATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
*Henderson, KY*

Environmental scientist responsible for preparing the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) report, which includes, but is not limited to, the following natural and social environmental issues: air quality, noise quality, hazardous materials, wetlands and streams, water quality, farmlands, land use and land cover, terrestrial and aquatic communities, threatened and endangered species, economic impacts, community impacts, relocations, environmental justice and Title VI, recreational areas, archeological and historical resources, visual impacts, Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties, and secondary and cumulative impacts. Responsibilities also included preparing the Environmental Due Diligence Audit (EDDA).
APPENDIX B

Airport Layout Drawing
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGIONAL AIRPORT

Master Plan Update
1 Airport Blvd
Bentonville, AR 72712
Project No.: 1414700-130247

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Mead and Hunt, Inc.
1743 Wazee Street,
Denver, CO 80202
Phone: 303-825-8844
http://www.meadhunt.com

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#1 OF #22 SHEETS

10/22/2014
1414700-130247

MM
JWB

ISSUED
CHECKED BY:
DESIGNED BY:
DRAWN BY:
DATE:
M&H NO.:
APPENDIX C

Noise Model Results
APPENDIX D

Agency Coordination
Good morning Adam, here’s my thoughts on both noise and agency coordination:

Noise:

In my opinion the proposed action noise contours at XNA do not represent an extraordinary circumstance for noise and noise compatible land use as defined in FAA Order 1050.1F, Section 4-3.3, Exhibit 4.1, *Significance Determination for FAA Actions*. The Proposed Action would not increase noise by DNL 1.5 dB or more for a noise sensitive area that is exposed to noise at or above the DNL 65 DNL dB noise exposure level, or that will be exposed at or above the DNL 65 dB level due to a DNL 1.5 dB or greater increase, when compared to the no action alternative for the same timeframe.

Agency coordination: The proposed action does not appear to require further agency coordination at this time. Should the scope of the project change and noise contours run again, please provide me with the updated contours for evaluation.

Thanks,

Robb

Robb Ramos
Environmental Protection Specialist
Arkansas/Oklahoma Airports District Office
(817) 222-5359

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http://www.faa.gov/airports/
From: White, Adam T. <ATWhite@GarverUSA.com>
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2020 2:13 PM
To: Ramos, Roberto (FAA) <Roberto.Ramos@faa.gov>
Cc: Tim House <tim.house@flyxna.com>; Ryan Hannan <ryan.hannan@flyxna.com>; Hayes, Jeremy S. <JSHayes@GarverUSA.com>; Mountain, Ryan C. <RCMountain@GarverUSA.com>
Subject: RE: XNA Runway 17-35 EA Noise Contour Analysis & APE

Robb:

Just checking in to see if you had any questions regarding the updated exhibit for XNA. Let me know if you think agency coordination is warranted given the APE.

Thanks! – Adam

Adam White, PE
Garver
479-287-4635

From: White, Adam T.
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2020 2:01 PM
To: Ramos, Roberto (FAA) <Roberto.Ramos@faa.gov>
Cc: Tim House <tim.house@flyxna.com>; Ryan Hannan <ryan.hannan@flyxna.com>; Hayes, Jeremy S. <JSHayes@GarverUSA.com>; Mountain, Ryan C. <rcmountain@garverusa.com>
Subject: RE: XNA Runway 17-35 EA Noise Contour Analysis & APE

Robb:

See attached for updated exhibits with the legend labels corrected. My apologies for the previous mistake.

Please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions during your review. Thanks! – Adam

Adam White, PE
Garver
479-287-4635

From: White, Adam T.
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 5:13 PM
To: Ramos, Roberto (FAA) <Roberto.Ramos@faa.gov>
Cc: Tim House <tim.house@flyxna.com>; Ryan Hannan <ryan.hannan@flyxna.com>; Hayes, Jeremy S. <JSHayes@GarverUSA.com>
Subject: XNA Runway 17-35 EA Noise Contour Analysis & APE

Robb:

We have completed the noise contour analysis for the Runway 17-35 Environmental Assessment at XNA. I’ve attached a PDF that includes three noise exhibits to this email. A summary of each exhibit is below:

- Exhibit 1 – No Action Alternative 2040 Noise Exposure
- Exhibit 2 – Preferred Action Alternative 2040 Noise Exposure
This includes the same fleet as the No Action Alternative, with all operations split 90/10 between the runways as described in the SOW.

- Exhibit 3 – Comparison of the 65 DNL lines for both No Action and Preferred Action.
  - Area shaded reflects locations where the 65 DNL line for the Proposed Action is outside of the 65 DNL line for the No Action Alternative.

Based on this analysis, it is our recommendation that the APE associated with the EA reflect the orange shaded area shown on Exhibit 3. Let us know if you concur with this recommendation.

Based upon the approved SOW, the next step (after the APE is determined) would be for FAA to initiate consultation with SHPO and Tribes. If we keep the APE on Airport Property as shown, do you expect a need to consult SHPO and the Tribes?

Thanks again for all your help on this project! Feel free to give me or Tim House at XNA a call if you have any questions.
– Adam

Adam White, PE
Senior Project Manager
Aviation Leader

479-527-9100
479-747-1991
APPENDIX E

Public Involvement
(To be included in Final EA Document)