

WRITTEN RE-EVALUATION OF THE MARCH 2018 DRAFT SPACEPORT CAMDEN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Introduction and Background

Introduction

The FAA has prepared this WR in compliance with Paragraph 9-2 of FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, because more than three years has passed since the release of the Spaceport Camden Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The FAA issued a Draft EIS for the proposed Spaceport Camden in March 2018 for public review and comment. The Draft EIS evaluated the potential environmental impacts from the FAA's proposed action of issuing a Launch Site Operator License to the Camden County Board of Commissioners (County) for the operation of a launch site. As analyzed in the Draft EIS, the license would allow the County to offer the launch site to commercial launch operators to conduct launches and first stage landings of liquid-fueled, small to medium-large lift-class, orbital and suborbital vertical launch vehicles. Development of the launch site, as evaluated in the Draft EIS, would include construction of supporting buildings and infrastructure. Operation would include up to 12 vertical launches and up to 12 associated launch vehicle first-stage landings per year. The public comment period closed on June 14, 2018.

The County made the following modifications to the Spaceport Camden Launch Site Operator License Application in January 2020:

- Change from medium-large launch vehicles to small launch vehicles, as defined in Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 420.
- Removal of first-stage returns and ocean landings because all current small launch vehicles are expendable.
- Change from an 83- to 115-degree trajectory range to a single 100-degree trajectory, consistent with the requirements of 14 CFR § 420.19.

The FAA developed a Final EIS that focuses on small launch capability and removes the medium-large lift vehicle from the analysis. The Final EIS addresses updates to the Proposed Action since the release of the Draft EIS and incorporates responses to all comments received on the Draft EIS.

The FAA's environmental procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provide that the FAA may prepare a written re-evaluation (WR) to determine whether the contents of a previously prepared environmental document remain substantially valid or whether significant changes to a previously analyzed proposed action require the preparation of a supplemental environmental assessment or EIS. FAA Order 1050.1F, Paragraph 9-1.c states "[a] draft EIS may be assumed valid for a period of three years. If the proposed final EIS is not submitted to the approving official within three years from the date of the draft EIS circulation, a written re-

evaluation must be prepared in accordance with Paragraph 9-2 of this Order (unless a decision has been made to prepare a new or supplemental draft EIS).”

In accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, Paragraph 9-2.c, the preparation of a new or supplemental EIS is not necessary when the following can be documented:

1. The proposed action conforms to plans or projects for which a prior EA and FONSI have been issued or a prior EIS has been filed and there are no substantial changes in the action that are relevant to environmental concerns;
2. Data and analyses contained in the previous EA and FONSI or EIS are still substantially valid and there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts; and
3. Pertinent conditions and requirements of the prior approval have been, or will be, met in the current action.

This WR provides documentation for the above three factors as well as the FAA’s conclusion that the contents of the Draft EIS remain current and substantially valid and that the decision to issue a Final EIS for the Proposed Action is supported.

Background

Draft EIS

On March 9, 2018, the FAA released a Draft EIS analyzing the potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating a proposed vertical launch facility (called Spaceport Camden) in Camden County, Georgia. The analyses contained in the Draft EIS were based on the County’s application to operate a medium-large lift class launch vehicle. The FAA held two public hearings on the Draft EIS on April 11 and 12, 2018 and accepted public comments on the Draft EIS at the hearings and via mail, email, and the project website through June 14, 2018.

Camden County Application

On January 29, 2019, Camden County submitted a license application to the FAA. The application proposed a range of launch vehicles from small to medium-large. The FAA accepted the County’s license in June 2019, which triggered the FAA’s 180-day review period scheduled to close on December 16, 2019. Prior to the close of the license determination period, the County notified the FAA that it intended to submit an amended application that would limit proposed launch operations to small launch vehicles and asked that the FAA’s determination period be tolled. On January 15, 2020, the County submitted its amended application in which the scope of the project was constrained to small launch vehicles only from medium to large vehicles. The amended application also limited the launch trajectory to a single 100-degree trajectory, as compared to the previous 83 to 115 degree-range, and eliminated return/flyback of the first stage of the rocket. The FAA agreed to toll the license determination period effective as of December 14, 2020, the 178th day of the 180-day license determination period.

Subsequent NEPA Process

The FAA then conducted extensive analyses of the environmental impacts of small launch vehicle operations and confirmed that all potential environmental impacts of small launch vehicles fell within the potential impacts of the medium-large lift class vehicle, as described in the March 2018 Draft EIS. The FAA developed a Final EIS and provided a preliminary copy to the cooperating and participating agencies¹ for review and comment.

The Final EIS for the proposed Spaceport Camden incorporates changes to the Proposed Action since the Draft EIS and addresses applicable public and agency comments on the Draft EIS. The most notable changes in the final EIS include the following: (1) change from medium-large launch vehicles to small-lift launch vehicles as defined in Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 420; (2) removal of first-stage returns and ocean landings; and (3) change from an 83- to 115-degree trajectory range to a single 100-degree trajectory.

Proposed Action

The Final EIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts that may result from FAA's Proposed Action of issuing a Launch Site Operator License to Camden County. The license would allow the County to offer Spaceport Camden to commercial launch operators to conduct launches of liquid-fueled, small, orbital, vertical launch vehicles. Development of the launch site includes construction of supporting buildings and infrastructure. Operation would include up to 12 vertical launches, up to 12 wet dress rehearsals, and up to 12 static fire engine tests per year. Alternatives under consideration include the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, FAA would not issue a Launch Site Operator License to the County, the County would not purchase or lease the property, and no activities related to constructing or operating a commercial spaceport would occur at the site. Future Launch Operator License applications would require additional environmental review under NEPA by FAA before any such license would be authorized.

¹ NASA and National Park Service are cooperating agencies on the EIS. US Navy and US Coast Guard are participating agencies.

Conclusion

This is not a situation in which a Draft EIS has been sitting dormant for an extended period of time. Instead, in the interim between the issuance of the Draft EIS and the present, the FAA has performed re-analyses of the data included in the Draft EIS due to the revisions to the scope of the County's application and these data, and analyses are current and valid. Based on these activities and the FAA's review, and in conformity with FAA Order 1050.1F, Paragraph 9-2.c, the FAA has concluded that the Proposed Action conforms materially to plans for which the Draft EIS was filed and there are no substantial changes in the action that are relevant to environmental concerns; the data and analyses that are updated in the Final EIS fall within those contained in the Draft EIS and are still substantially valid. There are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts and pertinent conditions and requirements of the approval will be met in the current action. Therefore, the preparation of a new or supplemental EIS is not necessary.

Responsible FAA Official: **DANIEL P MURRAY**
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