

**FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/ RECORD OF DECISION**

for the  
Proposed Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Replacement  
at  
Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD), Rockford, Illinois

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND  
RECORD OF DECISION  
AIRPORT TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER REPLACEMENT AT  
CHICAGO ROCKFORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (RFD), ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This document is the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) for the proposed Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Replacement at Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD). This FONSI/ROD is based on the information and analysis contained in the attached Final Environmental Assessment (EA), dated May 2026. This Final EA also tiers<sup>1</sup> off the Final Programmatic EA (FAA ATCT Final PEA) and FONSI/ROD issued in October 2023.<sup>2</sup> This RFD ATCT Final EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 4321 et seq.); FAA Order 1050.1G, *FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures*; and the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (Public Law 118-5).

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58), enacted on November 15, 2021, appropriated \$25 billion over a five-year period (Fiscal Year 2022-2026) for airport and air traffic control projects. The FAA established the ATCT Replacement Program to replace existing FAA-owned ATCTs at mainly non-major airports with modern ATCT facilities.

As detailed in the FAA ATCT Final PEA and FONSI/ROD, the FAA identified and analyzed reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts for the broad scope of actions planned for ATCT replacement activities. This programmatic approach allows the FAA to review project-specific details and reasonably foreseeable impacts during the planning and site selection process for those ATCT projects within the scope of the PEA analysis. The FAA ATCT Final PEA and FONSI/ROD identified the following resource categories as having “no significant impact” (FAA, 2023):<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tiering in accordance with NEPA is defined in FAA Order 1050.1G, Section 3-1.

<sup>2</sup> On June 30, 2025, the FAA rescinded its NEPA implementation procedures in FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, and issued new NEPA implementing procedures in FAA Order 1050.1G, *FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures*. The FAA ATCT Final PEA (2023) applied FAA Order 1050.1F and provided appropriate citations to that Order, where appropriate. There are no material changes to the analysis of environmental effects for the issuance and implementation of the FAA ATCT Final PEA caused by the updated FAA NEPA implementing procedures.

<sup>3</sup> Executive Order 13990, *Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis*, was revoked as well as the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) implementing regulations for NEPA. In addition, on January 21, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14173, *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*. Due to the rescission of prior Executive Orders regarding climate and environmental justice and the recent action by the CEQ to rescind the NEPA implementing regulations, it is no longer a legal requirement or the policy of the federal government to conduct climate or environmental justice analyses. Any prior data gathering, analysis, or discussion regarding climate or environmental justice is not relevant for purposes of evaluating the NEPA significance of this project, nor did it play any role in agency decision-making.

- Air Quality – The Proposed Action would result in a short-term and temporary increase in emissions and dust (particulate matter) during construction and demolition activities. In addition, a long-term reduction in emissions from reduced energy use is expected from the new ATCT.
- Farmlands – The Proposed Action is not within prime farmlands and would not involve the disturbance, conversion, or removal of any prime farmlands.
- Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention – The Proposed Action would result in short-term and temporary impacts during construction and use of fuels and chemicals, and short-term and temporary impacts from demolition and removal of waste or other unknown materials from the existing ATCT site.
- Land Use – The Proposed Action would not require any changes to land use as described in the airport master plan.
- Natural Resources and Energy Supply – The Proposed Action would result in long-term beneficial impacts from reductions in energy use.
- Noise – The Proposed Action would result in short-term and temporary impacts during construction and demolition activities from equipment and vehicle noise.
- Socioeconomics and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risks – The Proposed Action would result in short-term and temporary impacts during construction and demolition from minimal increases in employment, materials, or equipment purchases.

The RFD Final EA included site-specific analyses for the six resource areas not covered by the FAA ATCT Final PEA and FONSI/ROD; these are historic and cultural resources, visual effects, coastal resources, biological resources, Section 4(f) resources, and water resources.

## **II. PROPOSED ACTION**

The FAA’s Proposed Action is to replace the existing ATCT with a modern ATCT at RFD airport. The following activities are anticipated as part of the Proposed Action:

- Acquisition of a new lease with the airport authority to construct an ATCT in a new location.
- Unconditional approval of portions of the Airport Layout Plan that depict those portions of the Proposed Project subject to FAA review and approval pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 47107(a)(16).
- Construction and operation of a replacement ATCT, an administrative base building, Terminal Radar Approach Control Facility (TRACON), and other associated facility support features such as a parking area and security fences.
- Extension and/or relocation of access roads and utilities to the replacement ATCT.
- Installation of modern air traffic control electronic equipment in the replacement ATCT.
- Commissioning of the replacement ATCT, cutover of air traffic services to the replacement ATCT, and decommissioning of the existing ATCT.
- Demolition and disposal of the existing ATCT facility and associated infrastructure.
- Modification and/or relocation of existing NAS facilities or airport structures necessary to enable project implementation.

## **III. PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The ATCT serves as an observation facility for air traffic controllers to monitor aircraft take-offs and landings and ground traffic visually and electronically within the RFD airfield. Air traffic controllers within the RFD ATCT facility ensure aircraft are properly separated and enhance the safety of aircraft operations at and in the vicinity of RFD.

Section 2 of the Final EA stated the purpose and need of the Proposed Action, which tiers from the purpose and need described in the FAA ATCT Final PEA. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to replace the RFD ATCT with a modern ATCT providing for uninterrupted air traffic control services. The RFD ATCT is an FAA-owned ATCT eligible for replacement under the ATCT Replacement Program.

The Proposed Action for the RFD ATCT would provide for a modern ATCT for uninterrupted air traffic control services that would meet all applicable FAA tower requirements. The replacement ATCT at RFD would enable the installation of modern and required air traffic control equipment, provide adequate space and an enhanced work environment for FAA personnel, lower operating costs, and improve environmental performance. The FAA recognizes the need to provide continual air traffic control services at RFD due to the existing tower lacking the ability to accommodate upgrades to the latest air traffic control technologies, lacking the personnel space requirements, modern amenities, and having physical problems such as maintenance-intensive deficient mechanical appurtenances (e.g., heating and ventilation, plumbing). Improvements made to rectify this situation would ensure uninterrupted air traffic control services to maintain the safety of the NAS.

#### **IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The following provides a summary of the alternatives development process and alternatives considered.

**Identification and Evaluation of Potential Alternatives** – The FAA identified criteria to select and evaluate alternatives (as described in Section 3.2 of the FAA ATCT Final PEA). These included ATCT technical criteria and other characteristics to meet the purpose and need. The RFD ATCT Final EA considered the proposed replacement and/or upgrade of the ATCT for uninterrupted air traffic control services, while improving the safety, efficiency, and resiliency of the NAS.

**Alternatives Analyzed in the Final EA** – In addition to the Proposed Action, the RFD ATCT Final EA analyzed the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, replacement and demolition of the existing ATCT and associated facilities would not occur. The existing ATCT would continue to be in use for air traffic control operations. Construction of a new ATCT would not occur, additional space for air traffic operations and new, modern equipment would not be available, and improvements to the safety, efficiency, and resiliency of the NAS would not be realized at RFD. The No Action Alternative, consistent with FAA Order 1050.1G, serves as a baseline against which the impacts of Alternative 2 are compared and contrasted in the RFD ATCT Final EA. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the project.

**Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)** - The RFD ATCT Final EA evaluated this alternative for proposed replacement of the FAA-owned ATCT and associated structures at RFD meeting the purpose and need (described above) for uninterrupted air traffic control services, while improving the safety, efficiency, and resiliency of the NAS. Upon construction and commissioning of the new replacement ATCT and cutover of air traffic control services, the existing facilities would be decommissioned and demolished, and the sites would be restored to their original condition and transferred back to the Rockford Airport Authority.

#### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS AND MITIGATION**

The FAA identified and evaluated reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts in the RFD ATCT Final EA. The Proposed Action would not change flight patterns, altitudes, or aircraft traffic volumes. Noise levels would be unchanged. This Final EA tiers off of the FAA ATCT Final PEA and FONSI/ROD (October 2023)

which identified that ATCT replacement is not reasonably foreseeable to have significant impacts to air quality; climate; compatible land uses; farmlands; hazardous materials, solid waste, and pollution prevention; noise; socioeconomics and children's environmental health and safety risks; or natural resources and energy supply. A site-specific evaluation validated that significant impacts are not anticipated to these resource categories.

The RFD ATCT Final EA included site-specific analyses for the six resource areas not covered by the findings of the FAA ATCT Final PEA and FONSI/ROD: historic and cultural resources, visual effects, coastal resources, biological resources, Section 4(f) resources, and water resources. The Proposed Action is not located within close proximity to any coastal resources; therefore, analysis of this resource is not included in the EA. The Proposed Action is not reasonably foreseeable to have any impacts to historic and cultural resources, visual effects, biological resources, or Section 4(f) resources. Water resources could be impacted (short-term) downstream through erosion, contaminated runoff, or sedimentation from the construction site. The Proposed Action is not reasonably foreseeable to result in significant impacts on human health and the environment.

Best management practices were identified in the RFD ATCT Final EA for the resources analyzed; none are necessary to reduce reasonably foreseeable significant impacts below applicable significance thresholds. Based on the analysis within this RFD ATCT Final EA, the FAA has determined there would be no significant impact to the human environment from implementation of the Proposed Action.

## **VI. FINDING**

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein and the attached RFD ATCT Final EA, the undersigned finds that the Proposed Action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of NEPA and other applicable requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation to Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. As a result, the FAA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Based on the administrative review of this project, I certify, as prescribed by 49 U.S.C. § 44502(b) that implementation of the Proposed Action is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce.

Having met all relevant requirements for environmental considerations and consultation, and under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I approve the Proposed Action described in the RFD ATCT Final EA and in this FONSI/ROD and authorize the Proposed Action to be undertaken at such time as other requirements have been met.

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Infrastructure Engineering Group Manager  
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### **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

This FONSI/ROD presents the Federal Aviation Administration's final decision and approvals for the actions identified, including those taken under provision of 49 U.S.C. Subtitle VII, Parts A and B. This FONSI/ROD constitutes a final order of the Administrator and is subject to the exclusive judicial review by the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals for the District of Columbia or the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the person contesting the decision resides or has its principal place of business in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. Section 46110.