



Chief Executive Office.

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Fesia A. Davenport

June 13, 2024

To: Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Fesia A. Davenport 
Chief Executive Officer
FAD (Jun 11, 2024 17:52 PDT)

RE-ENVISIONING WHITEMAN AIRPORT: EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES (ITEM NO. 16, AGENDA OF APRIL 9, 2024)

On April 9, 2024, the Board adopted a Motion directing the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with the Department of Public Works, to report back in 60 days with: 1) a plan and cost estimate to conduct a study of potential land uses for the 184-acre Whiteman Airport Property, both as an operational airport and if the airport were to close down; and 2) an economic analysis of the impacts to the County and the Pacoima community if the airport were to close, including: a) community jobs created and resulting direct, indirect, and induced effects; b) financial implications of existing airport property contract rights and prior lease agreements; c) impacts to airport businesses; d) financial impacts to the overall system of five County airports; and e) an appraisal of the fair market value of the land and existing improvements.

My office along with the Departments of Economic Opportunity and Public Works developed the attached proposed scope of work for a team of airport and aviation planning experts needed to complete the study. To develop an effective study process, we recommend a four-phase study proceeding with the first two phases and then determining the best approach to complete the final two: 1) Confirmation of Airport Closure Process; 2) Existing Conditions Analysis; 3) Options Development Incorporating Stakeholder Input; and 4) Economic Impact Analysis of Preferred Options. The types of uses allowable at Whiteman Airport Property during a multi-year closure of the airport would be identified during the first two study phases.



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Identifying allowable uses would provide the County with options to implement alternatives geared toward improving the quality of life for the surrounding area and creating economic development opportunities. An appraisal may also be needed pending Board direction to advance a particular option or strategy.

The estimated rough order of magnitude cost to complete the first two study phases is approximately \$350,000, with the total estimated cost for all four study phases and an appraisal being up to \$1.3 million. Additional analyses may be required, pending Board direction on next steps.

Upon identification of a funding source for the first two study phases, a contracting vehicle will be identified to proceed with a qualified team of airport and aviation planning experts. Should funding for the first two study phases require new net County cost, my office may evaluate funding for the above-referenced motion in your Board's fiscal resilience process.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me or John T. Cooke at (213) 893-2477 or jcooke@ceo.lacounty.gov.

FAD:JMN:JTC
KQ:CE:dj

Attachment

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Economic Opportunity
Public Works

**Proposed Scope of Work
Re-envisioning Whiteman Airport: Expanding Economic Opportunities**

A scope of work (SOW) for the process of re-envisioning Whiteman Airport Property (WHP) is outlined below. This SOW will require a team of experts with extensive aviation and airport planning experience, including airport master plans, environmental issues, and airside/landside operations. It will also require expertise in the development of a range of project types including commercial, business, and residential land use and development, as well as experience in providing financial analysis of a range of complex real estate and economic development scenarios and economic impacts. The proposed study will leverage the extensive work completed by the Department of Public Works, which is posted here: [Los Angeles County Airports \(lacounty.gov\)](https://lacounty.gov)

The County will work with a qualified consultant team to develop a more detailed scope of work and fee proposal. The fee estimates provided below are a rough-order-of-magnitude estimates to be confirmed in during a detailed study scoping process.

To ensure the study is developed efficiently, cost effectively and nimbly, it is recommended that the study proceed in a strategically sequenced manner. The proposed SOW includes four phases to be completed sequentially as follows, with preliminary rough estimates of the cost to complete each phase. As scope is refined, costs may need to be allocated differently between the four proposed phases. Lastly, costs for legal analysis and environmental clearances are not included, and any additional required analyses are pending Board direction on next steps.

1) Confirmation and Implications of Airport Closure Process (up to \$200,000)

The first step in this phase will be to list the types of uses allowable at the WHP as an operating airport during the closure process, including beautification improvements and reuse of selected buildings for community services and economic development. Then, to build on the work prepared to date by the County and outlined in the April 7, 2022, report back to the Board, the closure process will be further examined to ensure all key steps and critical issues are identified, including compliance with all Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) requirements, grant assurances, relevant federal obligations, lease agreements and other contractual requirements. By confirming and potentially expanding on the County's understanding of the closure process and requirements, the analysis will ensure the County's cost/benefit analysis and economic impact analysis includes all costs, time impacts, pertinent steps and regulatory hurdles related to a potential closure of WHP. In addition, completing this study phase will confirm the scope and utility of completing study phases 2-4 below in the context of the implications of closing WHP operations.

2) Existing Conditions Analysis (up to \$150,000)

Second, leveraging PW's knowledge and expertise as WHP's operator, the team will identify and document existing airport operations, airport uses and non-aviation related uses, community context and other relevant existing conditions to establish a baseline of comparison for economic impact analysis for future scenarios. This phase will include collecting data from airport, tenants, FAA and other sources for details on

the types and levels of current activity at WHP for: 1) personal use aircraft (individuals or flying clubs), 2) corporate aircraft including fractional ownership and specific businesses, 3) fixed base operators, 4) flight schools, 5) air ambulance/medical/disaster relief, 6) civil air patrol, 7) experimental aircraft, 8) law enforcement, 9) firefighters, 10) US Forest Service, and 11) LA County Fire.

As the data is being collected, the team will also conduct research on the implications of these activities relocating to alternative airports including an understanding of the proximity of users, as well as current and future facility demands and use.

This phase, building on the work in Phase 1, will also outline options for adding allowable uses, beyond what may exist at the airport today, now and during an airport closure process.

3) Options for Development Incorporating Stakeholder Input (up to \$300,000)

The team will explore and develop a range of scenarios that compare a full closure of WHP to partial closures, or continued airport uses coupled with suggestions for current operations to improve the environmental footprint and reduce impacts on the surrounding community. Not only will highest and best uses for the land be developed to identify potential scenarios, but stakeholder input will also be solicited to develop concepts that include the following uses: airport, County, compatible non-aviation, and economic and mixed-use developments should a full WHP closure be pursued. To develop a stakeholder and community engagement plan, the team will leverage the extensive community outreach summarized in the September 25, 2023, report to the Board in response to the December 8, 2020, motion adopted by the Board.

The options will be framed given environmental conditions or other relevant circumstances that may influence final land use plans. All scenarios will be developed with an eye towards key regulatory compliance matters, including but not limited to local financial conditions, the Surplus Land Act which requires local agencies to make land available for affordable housing before selling or leasing the land for another purpose, the California Environmental Quality Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. Options will be evaluated against non-economic criteria and a select number of preferred options will be advanced to the next phase of analysis.

4) Economic Impact Analysis of Preferred Options (up to \$525,000)

Lastly, once full compliance with FAA regulations is accounted for and various land use plan concepts are developed, including full closure, partial closure, and alternative management of existing airport uses, a high-level understanding of economic impacts of the preferred options will be identified and analyzed.

This includes direct, indirect, and induced impact to the County from aviation, non-aviation or alternative uses at WHP under different scenarios defined in the preceding tasks. Current airport operations including airside and landside economic activity will inform assumptions, with alternative scenarios based on benchmarking and research.

Such impacts will include but are not limited to the specific issues directed by the motion, and are anticipated to include: 1) estimated impact of a pending closure on current and future year demand, 2) estimated distribution of “remaining” WHP demand across alternative airports, 3) costs associated with continued operations, 4) revenue associated with continued operations, 5) timelines for closure (if pursued) and redevelopment, 6) community jobs created, including direct, indirect and induced economic impacts, 7) financial implications of existing airport property contract rights and prior lease agreements, including policy issues related to rates and charges, 8) how any estimated Airport fund balances are or are not credited back to aeronautical users, 9) impacts to airport businesses, and 10) financial impacts to the overall system of five County airports.

The team will use economic multipliers from IMPLAN or Lightcast to define direct, indirect, and induced economic activity generated under each scenario in terms of dollars and jobs created in the County during a stable year of operations. In addition, the timing of impacts will be defined depending on when alternative development/operational scenarios will be feasibly realized. Finally, the team will account for potential impacts from other airport adjacent development under closure or partial closure scenarios to paint a complete picture of potential benefits. The team will also examine net fiscal impact of airport operations, accounting for revenues and costs to the County, under current conditions or continued operations, and future changes in fiscal impacts for up to 2 additional (a total of 3) development scenarios.

**Potential Additional Analyses Pending Board Direction on Next Steps
\$125,000+TBD**

Pending the Board’s direction to advance next steps on a particular option or strategy, an appraisal of the fair market value of the WHP for highest & best uses compared to an appraisal of existing conditions may need to be conducted by the County. An appraisal for an airport property of this size and complexity is estimated to be up to \$125,000.

Additional analysis on potential economic and environmental impacts on surrounding communities and airports could also be explored in association with the selected option to advance pending direction from the Board of Supervisors.

February 5, 2024 - Public Works and Public Health Reports Back ABSTRACT

The Department of Public Works (DPW) reported on their efforts to implement: 1) reduce and eliminate the impacts related to the use of leaded aviation gasoline at Whiteman Airport Property (WHP), 2) move the aircraft runup areas further away from the runway ends, and 3) administer a curfew restricting the use of the runway during night-time hours from 10:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.

Additionally, the Department of Public Health reported on their collaboration with the California Department of Public Health Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch regarding the assessment of existing and available blood level data and air quality data surrounding WHP.

- 1) Measures to reduce and eliminate impacts related to use of leaded aviation gasoline:
 - By June 2024, DPW will provide Swift Fuels UL94 unleaded aviation gasoline, in addition to the 100 low lead aviation gasoline currently available at the 5 County airports, until an unleaded aviation gasoline supported by the FAA and the aviation and energy industries is commercially available for all piston aircraft. FAA's goal is to eliminate leaded aviation fuels in piston-engine aircraft safely by the end of 2030.
- 2) Measures to move the aircraft runup areas (where planes idle during final safety checks) further away from the runway ends:
 - DPW met with the FAA on December 6, 2023, to discuss how the aircraft runup areas at WHP may be moved further away from the runway ends while still meeting the FAA's requirements and design criteria. This would help to minimize the impacts related to aircraft runups on the surrounding residential communities, particularly those on the north side of the airport along Pierce Street. With FAA concurrence, the work could be completed as early as fall 2024.
- 3) Implementation of a County administered mandatory curfew restricting the use of the runway during nighttime hours from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.:
 - Effective November 9, 2023, DPW implemented a voluntary nighttime curfew at WHP requesting that all aircraft operators, except for flights related to emergency, lifesaving, firefighting, law enforcement, government agencies, and services to the public, such as news media, avoid daily aircraft arrivals and departures between 10:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M.
 - To obtain FAA approval of any new mandatory restrictions on aircraft operations, an airport sponsor must complete a Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 161 Study – Notice and Approval of Airport Noise and Access Restrictions, which constitutes an application to the FAA for approval of the proposed restriction. In addition, any restriction on

operations must comply with the County's FAA grant obligations that generally prohibit unreasonable restrictions to access County airports.

- The typical time to complete the Part 161 Study exceeds 4 to 5 years at an estimated cost of approximately \$5 million, which may be funded up to 90 percent by an FAA Airport Improvement Program grant.
- The FAA allows an airport sponsor to use the Federal Aviation Regulations Part 150 Study – Airport Noise and Compatibility Planning process to meet many of the requirements of Part 161 application. The Part 150 process could allow the County to prepare a more robust Part 161 application and maximize opportunity for public input and comment. The FAA will not approve any measure that would discriminate among aircraft operators, create an unsafe situation, hinder air navigation, or interfere with commerce.
- In the near term, the County could choose to pursue Federal funding for, and initiate, a Part 150 Study for WHP. The study is a responsible step toward improving the compatibility between the airport and the surrounding communities and may assist in justifying a mandatory curfew. It is also consistent with the Community Advisory Committee WHP re-envisioning process report, and recommendations recently presented to the Board (September 25, 2023). Federal grant funding for Parts 150 and 161 Studies would result in grant assurances (therefore potentially delaying airport closure date).
- Typical it takes approximately 3 years to complete a Part 150 Study, which includes the time needed to gather data, conduct extensive public outreach, and allow for FAA review. The estimated cost to conduct a Part 150 Study is about \$2 million dollars, which may be funded up to 90 percent by the FAA Airport Improvement Program grant; securing this grant would require the airport to remain operational for the duration of these studies.

4) Assessment of the air quality monitoring data surrounding WHP:

- DPH completed a review of the WHP Lead Monitoring conducted by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. Air monitoring was conducted during two points in time 1) between 2018 and 2019, and 2) between July and September 2022.
- Data between 2018 and 2019 shows that ambient lead levels ranged from 0.4 ng/m³ to 19.7 ng/m³ with an average study value of 6.9 ng/m³.
These results are considerably lower than the U.S. EPA Lead National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) of 150 ng/m³.
- Data between July and September 2022 demonstrated lead to be within the typical range and more than 10 times lower than the U.S. EPA national standard for lead.
- Ambient lead concentrations in the nearby community were similarly significantly lower than US EPA standards.

5) Assessment of existing and available blood lead level data:

- The California Department of Public Health Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch reviewed lead data of children under 6 years old with blood lead levels (BLLs) equal to or greater than the CDC Blood Lead Reference Value (BLRV) of 3.5 mcg/dL by census tract for the years 2018-2022 within 1.5 miles from WHP.
- Based on the analysis, it does not appear that there is an increase in the number of children under 6 years old within 1.5 miles of WHP with blood lead levels equal or greater than the BLRV.
- The data used for this analysis area are home addresses aggregated by census tract, not individual home address.
- California does not have universal screening; only children meeting the current screening recommendations are tested which means that there are likely children under 6 years old around WHP that were not tested for lead.
- Only children with valid home addresses reported by the laboratory were included in the analysis which means some children's lab results may have been excluded.
- There is no safe level of lead in children's blood. This analysis only categorizes BLLs as above or below the CDC's BLRV (3.5 mcg/dL).

April 7, 2022 - Public Works Report Back ABSTRACT

This report outlined all the steps needed to close the Whiteman Airport Property (WHP), which was estimated to take 20 years from 2015 to meet all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements. The first step to facilitate airport closure can be summarized by four tasks: current conditions, regional context, financial analysis, and closure analysis. If the County decided to close the Whiteman Airport Property, the Department of Public Works (DPW) would lead these extensive efforts to gather the information and prepare the report for the FAA's consideration.

Current Conditions:

- Compile the history of property acquisition for the airport, including any FAA grants for the acquisition of real property and analysis of any deed restrictions or conditions placed on the land.
- Summary of FAA grants for the airport currently in effect and assessment of the remaining useful life and remaining value of facilities built with the FAA grants. The County has accepted 11 grants since 2001 for the airport. The FAA grant agreements typically last for 20 years and the remaining useful life and value of each improvement would be calculated using FAA guidelines.
- Summary of operational data and forecasts of aviation activity for the next 5 to 10 years, including annual flight operations, type of operations, and FAA classification data as made publicly available.
- Summary of the airport tenants, businesses, hangar, and tie-down vacancy rates. Currently there are over 24 businesses leasing space at the airport in addition to individuals leasing hangar and tie-down spaces.
- Information on the use of the airport by law enforcement, medical, firefighters, and other first responders. The airport is currently used for aerial firefighting support (utilized by Los Angeles County Fire, United States Forest Service, and other support agencies), law enforcement/national security, disaster relief, and search and rescue (Civil Air Patrol Air Force Auxiliary Squadron 35 is based at the airport).
- Current airport layout plan and property map. DPW maintains these documents per FAA requirements and the current versions would be included in the report.
- Contracts and agreements for the use of the airport and analysis of how closure would affect existing property/lease/contract rights.
- Summary of use of the airport by community groups and noncommercial entities. The airport is currently used for aeromedical and air ambulance flights, news, weather, traffic reporting, aviation-oriented youth organizations and educational programs, aircraft viewing area, and meeting facilities.

Regional Context:

- The report would consider the surrounding airports and the effect that the closure may have on them.

- Summary of the region's other airports which support general aviation. Current and planned facilities, hangar and tie-down vacancy rates, delay statistics, and any known capacity issues or constraints.

Financial Analysis:

- Appraisal of the fair market value of the airport land and improvements paid for with FAA grant funds, including assessment of the financial impacts of the airport and the role in the overall County 5-airport system.
- Summary of expected costs of closure to the County.
- Transfer of the undepreciated value of FAA Airport Improvement Program to other airports. The analysis will use the data gathered about the airport's previous grants to determine existing or remaining value.

Closure Analysis:

- Plan for accommodating current airport tenants and users at other airports, including costs.
- Following FAA procedures and guidance, an analysis of regional airspace to assess impact of closing the airport.