

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Focus Group Meeting #5 Air Quality

Palm Beach International Airport Environmental Impact Statement for Airport Improvement Project

Focus Group A July 30, 2008

Focus Group Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the Focus Group Meeting was to provide neighborhood and community representatives an overview of the FAA's process for addressing Air Quality in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). FAA and its consultants (URS Corporation and KBE Environmental Sciences) provided information on the following topics:

- FAA's guidance for assessing air quality impacts;
- The types of supplemental air quality analysis that FAA conducted for the PBIA EIS;
- A description of the computer program used to model the existing and future air quality environment, including input assumptions and types of output; and
- How potential air quality impacts will be evaluated in the DEIS.

FAA noted that the agency has not made any findings or conclusions regarding potential significant air quality impacts at this point in the EIS study.

Focus Group Attendance

The Focus Groups are comprised of citizens representing the neighborhoods in the EIS study area. To facilitate discussion, two Focus Group meetings were scheduled. The same information was presented at both Focus Group meetings. Twenty-six Focus Group members (plus one guest each) were invited to the meeting on July 30. Focus Group Members and their guests in attendance at the meeting were:

Nancy Pullum – El Cid Historic Neighborhood Association
Theo Hayes - El Cid Historic Neighborhood Association (Guest)
Jose Rodriguez – Vedado Park Neighborhood Association
Gregg Weiss – Flamingo Park Neighborhood Association
Penny Payne – Flamingo Park Neighborhood Association
Tom Conboy – Poinciana Park Neighborhood Association
Joseph Rocchio - Poinciana Park Neighborhood Association
Raphael Clemente – Downtown Development Authority
Mayor Betty James – Town of Cloud Lake
John O'Neill – Southland Park Neighborhood Association
Nina Blakeman – Prospect Heights Neighborhood Association

In addition to the invited guests, five observers were in attendance at the meeting. The observers included one member of the media and four members of the public.

FAA and URS began the meeting with an introduction of participants, after which a Power Point presentation was made. Copies of the presentation material were provided to each Focus Group member attending the meeting approximately one week before the meeting. The presentation material was made available to the public after the meetings through the FAA's PBIA EIS web site.

Questions and issues discussed at the meeting are summarized below. Where possible, the person or persons asking the question or making the comment are identified. All responses were provided by the FAA on the night of the meeting.

Question: A Focus Group member [Tom Conboy] questioned how the DEIS accounts for the emissions from Interstate Highway 95, which is located between the airport and nearby neighborhoods.

Response: The emissions from I-95 are accounted for by Palm Beach County in other emission budgets. The FAA's EIS accounts for aircraft and vehicle emissions related to the Proposed Project and its alternatives. However, consideration is given to air quality impacts of area transportation projects in the analysis of cumulative impacts.

Question: Gregg Weiss asked if the FAA was looking at increased aircraft operations and vehicle traffic that would be generated by the proposed airport expansion.

Response: FAA stated that the project would not induce activity or increase aircraft operations or vehicular traffic. The purpose of the project is to accommodate existing and projected operations with an acceptable level of delay. [This response generated a general discussion of the purpose of the project, airport capacity, and growth issues among the group.]

Comment: Betty James stated that she lived in West Palm Beach for 37 years and that congestion is getting worse. She noted that congestion affects pollution.

Response: FAA acknowledged Ms. James' comment.

Question: Theo Hayes cited recent increases in fuel costs and its effect on aviation activity, airlines, and schedules. She stated that given the current economic situation, PBIA should not need to expand.

Response: FAA noted that the agency determined that there is a need to improve capacity to reduce delay at PBIA. However, the agency stated the effects of fuel prices and the impact of higher energy costs should be reflected in the next update of the Terminal Area Forecast (TAF), which is expected in December 2008. FAA also noted that there have been other periods of temporary economic downturn from which aviation has rebounded. FAA stated that the EIS is planning process and it is the FAA's responsibility to disclose impacts. It is up to the County to move forward with project if it is approved by the FAA.

Question: Nancy Pullum questioned the previous FAA statement that the project would not induce activity. She asked if the project would evaluate indirect/induced impacts. She stated that the DEIS needed to look at vehicle traffic in neighborhoods and the number of vehicles coming to the airport.

Response: Traffic for area road projects (i.e., Southern Boulevard and I-95 expansions) have been examined for air quality in their own EIS/EA documents. The FAA's DEIS considers on-airport vehicle emissions as part of the total air emissions resulting from the Proposed Project or its alternatives.

Comment: Tom Conboy stated that the EIS needs to consider cumulative impacts.

Response: It was noted that cumulative impacts are being considered in the DEIS.

Question: Gregg Weiss asked about the “build” and “no-build” approach used for assessing air quality impacts.

Response: The FAA can determine the impact of a particular alternative by comparing it to the No-Action Alternative. The difference between the two alternatives identifies the change caused by the alternative.

Question: Tom Conboy asked the FAA about PBIA’s forecast and the decrease in aviation activity at PBIA as compared to the same month last year. Tom Conboy asked about projections for itinerant general aviation (GA) aircraft. He noted a downward trend in itinerant GA operations is incongruous with the robust FAA forecast for itinerant GA operations. He suggested that if you take out GA operations, the trend is downward and it should continue downward sharply.

Response: FAA noted that PBIA’s operations numbers are down as compared to the prior year, but the general trend patterns (i.e., seasonal peaks) are consistent with previous years and the TAF. FAA then discussed the TAF for PBIA.

Question: Nancy Pullum noted that the DEIS does not include dispersion modeling.

Response: Dispersion modeling is conducted when it is necessary to demonstrate compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Because Palm Beach County is in attainment for the NAAQS, the General Conformity rules do not apply, and dispersion modeling was not required.

Question: Joseph Rocchio asked about Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs) and how much information was available to determine if the findings in the DEIS were valid.

Response: FAA stated the DEIS includes an analysis of HAPs. The analysis was based on calculations specific to PBIA and the proposed airfield improvements. The FAA did not rely on on-going studies conducted at other airports (e.g., Los Angeles and Chicago), but found the knowledge gained from those studies has been helpful.

Comment: Gregg Weiss stated that there has been talk of installing an incinerator at PBIA to burn trash from international flights and the future air quality impacts of an incinerator should be included in the DEIS.

Response: FAA is unaware of any plans to install an incinerator at PBIA. *[Ed. – A subsequent discussion with the Palm Beach County Department of Airports revealed that they do not have any plans to install an incinerator at PBIA.]*

Question: What percentage of particulate matter associated with airport air quality presents the greatest risk to human health?

Response: Very fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) likely presents the greatest risk to human health. In a follow-on discussion, FAA noted that Palm Beach County is in attainment for all NAAQS, but is expected to be non-attainment for ozone in the future when the standards for ozone are lowered.

Question: Tom Conboy asked, "If you lived east of airport, what pollutant would you be concerned with?"

Response: FAA noted that ozone is usually the pollutant of concern. This response was followed by a brief discussion of ozone and typical sources of ozone in an urban area.

Question: Raphael Clemente asked if mercury would be considered in the DEIS.

Response: FAA noted that mercury can be looked at in HAPs; however, mercury is not commonly associated with airports and aviation activity.

Question: It was asked by Nancy Pullum and Penny Payne how the FAA's Emissions & Dispersion Modeling System (EDMS) was customized for PBIA; how old is the data used in study; and, when the model was last updated.

Response: FAA explained EDMS and that inputs for the model were derived from actual operational data from PBIA (2006), which includes information on aircraft operations and taxi times, ground service equipment, motor vehicles, and fuel systems. EDMS inputs also included local meteorological information and operational information specific to each alternative studied in the DEIS. FAA noted that the model is routinely updated and that the most current version was used for the DEIS.

Question: Joseph Rocchio asked if the air emissions data in the DEIS was presented in a cumulative manner or if dispersed around the airport.

Response: FAA stated that the DEIS evaluated total emissions for each study year for each alternative and that dispersion modeling was not conducted for the DEIS.

Question: Nancy Pullum stated that the FAA used words like "model" and "forecast." She wanted to know "where are the real world information and calculations."

Response: FAA discussed the use of computer models in assessing potential environmental impacts. FAA also stated that EDMS analysis used several sources of "real world" information, such as aircraft operations at PBIA by aircraft type and aircraft engine performance specifications.

Question: Gregg Weiss asked how the FAA calculated delays.

Response: FAA noted use of the Airport and Airspace Simulation Model (SIMMOD) to calculate average annual delay. The delay information was one of the inputs in the EDMS.

Question: Gregg Weiss asked if the DEIS looked at air deposition of pollutants and its effect on water.

Response: FAA did not analyze the effects of air deposition on water quality.

Question: Tom Conboy asked if the EDMS showed reduced pollution because of projected increases airport capacity.

Response: FAA noted that EDMS indicated future reductions in air emissions at PBIA (as compared to the No-Action Alternative) because the alternatives would reduce delay and the time planes sat on the ground waiting for departure.

Question: Jose Rodriguez questioned why some of the deposition (“soot”) study collection stations were so far away from affected neighborhoods. He noted that Petty Park is covered by trees. He questioned the validity of collection sites. Nina Blakeman stated that many people closer to the airport would have offered their property for sampling. Betty Jones stated that FAA has ignored Cloud Lake and Glen Ridge on noise and air issues.

Response: FAA explained that the location of the air deposition collection sites were determined by the location of the soot complaints received from the EIS Scoping meeting, consideration of flight tracks, and day/night site access needs. The site locations provided a valid sampling of air deposition in the vicinity of PBI. FAA noted that Petty Park is an open, grassed field that is directly under the primary approach and departure flight tracks.

Question: Raphael Clemente asked when the air deposition data was collected.

Response: The collection period was a six week period in November and December 2007.

Question: Tom Conboy asked if soot causes cancer.

Response: The FAA’s response noted that the health risk depends greatly on exposure to certain chemicals. It was noted by Raphael Clemente that PM 2.5, due to its microscopic size, can get into the body and bloodstream easier.

Question: Jose Rodriguez asked how soot affects water and how would this affect people who use their pool.

Response: FAA stated that the purpose of the study was to look at air deposition in the vicinity of PBI and determine its characteristics. It was noted that a whole body of literature is available regarding exposure and health effects. The study conducted for the DEIS did not evaluate potential health effects from swimming in pools.

Question: Penny Payne asked if “we change the airport” what will be the effects on health and people. How will the study reflect the change? Penny questioned again the forecast and capacity issue.

Response: FAA noted again that the purpose of the air deposition study was to look at PBI’s contribution to depositional materials in the vicinity of the airport.

Question: Nancy Pullum noted that the permanent air quality monitoring stations in the county were away from the airport and that referencing these stations intentionally made the airport look “not so bad.” She asked where the monitoring stations were located, who owns them, and how they relate to the airport. She stated that they do not reflect air quality around airport.

Response: FAA noted that the data from the air monitoring stations was provided in the DEIS for informational purposes only. The information was not used in the EDMS and the FAA did not attempt to construe that the data from the monitoring stations reflect air quality in the vicinity of PBI. FAA noted that the monitoring stations are owned and operated by Palm Beach County.

Question: Gregg Weiss asked if the soot data collected could be used to evaluate soot deposition at different locations.

Response: FAA noted that the samples were taken in numerous locations and that if one wanted to, they could make some conclusions on their own with regard to other locations.

Comment: Tom Conboy stated he was at another FAA meeting where FAA said operations at PBIA were down. Nancy Pullum noted that the FAA has said “the agency has determined that capacity [at PBIA] is needed.”

Response: FAA explained the planning history at PBIA (the Master Planning process) and FAA’s environmental review process. This was followed by an open discussion of the need for the project and the FAA’s forecast for PBIA.

[End of Meeting]

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

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Focus Group B July 31, 2008

Focus Group Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the Focus Group Meeting was to provide neighborhood and community representatives an overview of the FAA's process for addressing Air Quality in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). FAA and its consultants (URS Corporation and KBE Environmental Sciences) provided information on the following topics:

- FAA's guidance for assessing air quality impacts;
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FAA noted that the agency has not made any findings or conclusions regarding potential significant air quality impacts at this point in the EIS study.

Focus Group Attendance

The Focus Groups are comprised of citizens representing the neighborhoods in the EIS study area. To facilitate discussion, two Focus Group meetings were scheduled. The same information was presented at both Focus Group meetings. Thirty-one Focus Group members (plus one guest each) were invited to the meeting on July 31. Focus Group Members and their guests in attendance at the meeting were:

Eugene Christophenson – Portofino South Condominium Association
Brenda Warren – Royal Palm Estates
Janel Horne – Royal Palm Estates
Gail Meade – Citizen's Committee on Aircraft Noise
JoAnne Jaimes – Parker Ridge Neighborhood Association
Terrance McMahon – Town of Haverhill

In addition to the invited guests, two observers were in attendance at the meeting. The observers included one Focus Group member (Group A) and a representative of the City of West Palm Beach.

FAA and URS began the meeting with an introduction of participants, after which a Power Point presentation was made. Copies of the presentation material were provided to each Focus Group member attending the meeting approximately one week before the meeting. The presentation material was made available to the public after the meetings through the FAA's PBIA EIS web site.

Questions and issues discussed at the meeting are summarized below. Where possible, the person or persons asking the question or making the comment are identified. All responses were provided by the FAA on the night of the meeting.

Comment: Joanne Jaimes stated she has to wash her house monthly. She noted that some small areas in the vicinity of PBIA may experience significant air quality impacts.

Response: Although the air quality study conducted for the DEIS could not examine individual sites and all sources of air emissions in the area, the DEIS contains a detailed analysis of existing and projected air emissions at PBIA. The DEIS also contains an analysis of air deposition (soot) samples taken in the vicinity of the airport.

Question: Joanne Jaimes questioned the term “existing conditions” for 2006.

Response: FAA noted that the discussion of “existing conditions” presents a baseline for describing PBIA and the surrounding community. Year 2006 is referenced as the baseline because data was available for the 2006 calendar year when the study was initiated in 2007.

Question: Joanne Jaimes wanted to know what the basis was for future study years 2013 and 2018, especially since there has been a dramatic change in airport activity from 2006 to 2008. How were future year conditions calculated?

Response: The Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) is developed by FAA and includes a forecast for PBIA. The next TAF update is due in December 2008. FAA is aware of the effect of fuel prices and economic conditions on aviation and it is considered in the preparation of the TAF. FAA will review and consider the updated TAF when it is published. If the forecast is lower (as expected), but not drastically lower, the FAA would not stop the EIS or re-do the analyses conducted to-date. FAA noted that use of the existing forecast numbers would be conservative and slightly overstate some of the environmental impacts (i.e., air quality and noise).
The FAA noted that the agency considers short-term and long-term trends. Over the long-term, aviation has always trended upward. FAA noted that short-term downward trends should not put off planning for future long-term aviation needs.

Question: Gail Meade questioned the location of the air deposition collection sites. On the east side of the airport, why are they so far from runway?

Response: FAA explained that the location of the air deposition collection sites were determined by the location of the soot complaints received from the EIS Scoping meeting, consideration of flight tracks, and day/night site access needs. The site locations provided a valid sampling of air deposition in the vicinity of PBIA.

Question: Brenda Warren asked if all studies for the DEIS have been completed.

Response: A majority of the work has been done, but the DEIS is undergoing internal FAA review. The FAA plans to publish the DEIS for public review in September 2008.

Question: Terrance McMahon asked about the FAA’s Record of Decision (ROD) on the EIS and whether it was the County’s decision to build the new runway.

Response: FAA explained that the agency’s role is to consider and disclose potential environmental impacts of the proposed improvements. The FAA’s findings will be documented in the ROD. The FAA may also participate in the project through issuance of grants to the County. The decision to actually build the runway lies with the County and not the FAA.

Question: Brenda Warren asked what would happen if the County deferred the project. Would the FAA have to go through the EIS process again?

Response: FAA explained that an EIS is usually good for a three year period. At the three year point, the FAA would review and re-evaluate the EIS findings if a project was deferred. If major project and/or local condition changes have occurred, the FAA would prepare a Supplemental EIS.

Question: Joanne Jaimes asked about potential funding for the project.

Response: FAA stated that projects of this size are normally funded by one or more of the following sources: Passenger Facility Charge (PFCs) collections, airport revenue bonds, Florida Department of Transportation grants, and FAA Airport Improvement Program grants. The County is responsible for financial decisions and identifying construction funding programs.

Question: Brenda Warren asked how people would be notified of the upcoming DEIS Public Hearing.

Response: The FAA stated it would publish notices in the Federal register, local newspapers, and on the project's web site (www.pbia-eis.com).

[End of Meeting]
