



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** December 8, 2021

**06**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**ADOPT MCCLELLAN-PALOMAR AIRPORT MASTER PLAN UPDATE, CERTIFY MASTER PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, AND PROVIDE DIRECTION ON AIRPORT SUSTAINABILITY (DISTRICT: 5)**

### **OVERVIEW**

McClellan-Palomar Airport (Palomar) is located in the City of Carlsbad and is one of eight airports owned and operated by the County of San Diego (County), at no cost to the General Fund. Palomar was constructed on County-owned property, and when it opened in 1959, the surrounding area consisted mainly of agricultural uses. Over the last 60 years, light industrial, commercial, and recreational uses have developed around the airport. The City of Carlsbad annexed the airport in 1978, citing economic benefits including significant tax revenues for the City and increased services for the County. Today, the airport serves the community and region as a vital air transportation hub, an emergency services facility, and an economic engine that supports 2,590 local jobs and generates \$72 million in tax revenues and \$461 million in economic activity annually.

Palomar is a federally funded public-use airport and part of the national air transportation system. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates this system and by federal law, airport owners and operators, such as the County, cannot restrict the size or type of aircraft landing or taking off from an airport. The FAA provides airports with guidance to safely accommodate the types of aircraft that use an airport, which is the foundation for the safety enhancements identified in the Palomar Master Plan Update (MPU). The FAA generally provides up to 90% grant funding for safety improvements; however, an approved and current Airport Layout Plan, which is included as part of the Master Plan, is required to be eligible for funding.

On December 16, 2015 (3), the County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed staff to update the Master Plan for Palomar. The Master Plan is a 20-year planning road map for airport capital improvements that emphasizes safety. The most recent Master Plan for Palomar, completed in 1997, had reached the end of its 20-year planning period. On September 25, 2013 (2), the Board considered the findings of a 2013 Feasibility Study, which studied a longer runway. The Board directed staff to focus the MPU on safety improvements for the aircraft currently using the airport while remaining within the existing airport property boundaries.

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On October 10, 2018 (1) the Board approved the MPU and certified the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). On November 6, 2018, a petition for Writ of Mandate and complaint was filed by Citizens for a Friendly Airport, challenging the Board's decision. On January 26, 2021, the Superior Court (Court) filed a Minute Order upholding the Final PEIR analysis and dismissing the claims, except on two items. While the Court determined the PEIR's noise analysis was generally adequate, the Court found the Final PEIR should have included supplemental noise analysis for areas farther from Palomar. In addition, the Court ruled that an amendment to the conditional use permit (CUP) with the City of Carlsbad must be sought if the design status of the airport is changed to accommodate the design critical aircraft.

On March 4, 2021, the Court ordered the County to set aside all approvals associated with the October 10, 2018, decision, which included the approval of the MPU, certification for the Final PEIR, and related actions, within 60 days. On May 5, 2021 (13), the Board rescinded the MPU and de-certified the PEIR and related environmental findings pursuant to the Court's order.

The County has now completed the additional noise analysis, as directed by the Court, and updated the PEIR and MPU to address the potential need for an amendment to the CUP. Staff has also developed options for the Board's consideration that would demonstrate the County's leadership in sustainability.

This is a request for the Board to: (1) select the airport design standard for Palomar, including a potential runway extension, which will increase federal grant funding eligibility, and allow the County to pursue safety enhancement projects to protect aircraft currently using Palomar. The Board will select either: (2A) adopt the MPU and take the actions in Item 3 below relating to the Final PEIR, or (2B) not adopt the MPU.

If Recommendation 2A is selected to adopt the MPU, then, together with its action to adopt the MPU, the Board must (3) certify the associated Final PEIR and supporting documents, which, with the added noise analysis, is consistent with the direction of the Superior Court.

(4) If the MPU and associated Final PEIR are adopted and certified, provide direction to staff on sustainability options, with staff's recommendation being to pursue an airport system-wide sustainability plan that will position the County to become a leader in aviation-based sustainability across the region.

If Recommendation 2B is selected to not adopt the MPU, then the Board will direct staff to evaluate other airport classifications; return to the Board for further direction upon evaluation and establish appropriations based on prior year Airport Enterprise Fund (AEF) Balance of \$1,100,000.

(5) If the MPU is not adopted, the Board can also direct staff to prepare a new Master Plan for Palomar Airport and provide direction on the inclusion of a sustainability plan.

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**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

See the Background Section of the Board Letter under Airport Design Standards and Attachment H for additional details on the Airport Master Plan Update options.

**1. Select the airport design standard, including a potential runway extension:**

Airport Design (Pick One)	AND	Runway Extension (Pick One)
<b>Option A.</b> B-II Enhanced Facility: Current design enhanced with installation of an Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS), which is like a runaway truck ramp for aircraft <b>AND</b>		1. None
		2. 200 feet
		3. Up to 900 feet
<b>Option B.</b> B-II Enhanced Facility Now and Condition D-III Modified Standards Compliance in the Future: Same as Option A, and adding future D-III design standards conditioned on addressing the Conditional Use Permit and Runway Protection Zone requirements and returning to the Board to consider D-III design standards and a runway extension option <b>AND</b>		1. None
		2. 200 feet
		3. Up to 900 feet
<b>Option C.</b> D-III Modified Standards Compliance: This alternative reconfigures the airport to meet the D-III design standards. It would shift the runway 123 feet to the north to provide the required separation between the runway and taxiway and includes the installation of EMAS on both ends of the runway <b>AND</b>		1. 370 feet
		2. 800 feet

**2. McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update:**

Option A. Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update based on the option selected above under Recommendation 1 related to airport design standard, including a potential runway extension, together with the actions in Item 3 below.

**OR**

Option B. Do Not Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update (Attachment H) and direct staff to evaluate other airport classification options and return to the Board for further direction upon evaluation **AND** establish appropriations of \$1,100,000 in the Airport Enterprise Fund (AEF) Spending Plan to provide funds for

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the evaluation of other airport classification options based on prior year available AEF fund balance. **(4 VOTES)**

**3. If Recommendation 2A is selected, then certify and adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update Environmental Documents together with its action to adopt the MPU:**

If the Board adopts the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update (Attachment H), then certify that the Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), SCH No. 2016021105 has been completed in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines, that the Final PEIR was presented to the Board, that the Board reviewed and considered the information contained therein, and that the Final PEIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board (Attachment B); **AND**

- A.** Adopt the Findings Concerning Mitigation of Significant Environmental Effects pursuant to Section 15091 of CEQA Guidelines (Attachment C); **AND**
- B.** Adopt the Statement of Location and Custodian of Record (Attachment E); **AND**
- C.** Adopt the decision and explanation regarding recirculation of draft PEIR (Attachment F); **AND**
- D.** Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program prepared in accordance with Section 15097 of CEQA Guidelines (Attachment G).

**4. If Recommendation 2A is selected to Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update, then provide direction on a sustainability plan by selecting one of the following options:**

Option A. Direct staff to prepare a McClellan-Palomar Airport Sustainability Plan

**OR**

Option B. Direct staff to prepare a County Airports System Sustainability Plan with a priority on implementing sustainability measures for McClellan-Palomar Airport [*Staff Recommendation*]

**5. If Recommendation 2B is selected to Not Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan, provide direction on the inclusion of a sustainability plan with a new Master Plan:**

Direct staff to prepare a new Master Plan for McClellan-Palomar Airport with Integrated Sustainability **AND** establish appropriations of \$4,500,000 in the Airport Enterprise

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Fund (AEF) Spending Plan to provide funds for development of a Master Plan for McClellan-Palomar Airport with Integrated Sustainability based on prior year available AEF fund balance. **(4 VOTES)**

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The eight airports owned and operated by the County of San Diego, Public Works, Airports (County Airports) provide vital air transportation hubs, emergency response facilities, and economic engines. The County pursues delivery of services at County Airports and actively works to remove barriers, encourage participation, and provide competitive opportunities for small businesses that traditionally have less working capital and business owners and managers that may be socially and economically underserved, through public outreach and added consideration in our procurement and leasing selection criteria.

County Airports connect rural, suburban, and urban communities, businesses, and people by facilitating over 518,000 commercial (using small 30 to 70 passenger aircraft), corporate (up to approximately 20 passengers), government, and private aircraft operations annually. As bases for CalFire, US Forest Service, Sheriff Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies, and Mercy Air, County Airports ensure the readiness and rapid response of emergency services for community members, including underserved communities. County Airports are home to over 100 aeronautical and non-aeronautical businesses. Through rents and user fees, County Airports are 100% self-funded, allowing General Fund revenues to be used for other priorities.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 Operational Plan for the Master Plan Update (MPU). If the current MPU is approved with an accompanying sustainability plan, this request will result in no change in the Airport Enterprise Fund (AEF) for FY 2021-2022.

If the Board directs staff to not adopt the Palomar Airport Master Plan, evaluate other airport classification options and return to the Board for further guidance upon evaluation (Recommendation 2B) or to prepare a new Master Plan with integrated sustainability (Recommendation 5), this request will result in costs of up to \$4.5 million in consultant services and staff costs for FY 2021-22. The funding source is the prior year available AEF fund balance. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

The proposed actions will not commit the County to construct any facilities or improvements and will not financially obligate the County. Staff will return to the Board at a future date for approval to advertise and award construction contracts as projects are fully designed, and for any necessary appropriations as funding becomes available for implementing the Board's selected MPU alternative. It is expected the projects will be completed in phases over the 20-year planning period, and staff will seek authorization to apply for federal and State grants in future years.

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**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) identifies Palomar as a National Primary Commercial Service Airport in the National Plan of Integrated Airports System, indicating both its national significance and its eligibility for federal grant funding for airport improvements. The FAA-certified Palomar for air carrier service in 1996, which grants airlines the authority to offer scheduled flights to the community and the greater San Diego region. The FAA-certified smaller, less-active airports, like Palomar, to become commercial service airports that offer regional service for 30 to 70 passenger aircrafts, with the focus to make services affordable for the region without compromising safety and operational capabilities. After Palomar was certified for Regional Service, airlines offered flights to Los Angeles and Phoenix using small, 30-passenger aircraft. This Regional Service at Palomar increased to an annual peak of 78,519 passengers in 2000. Beginning in 2008, airlines began to discontinue the use of this type of aircraft. The newer regional aircraft cannot operate at Palomar due to its short runway length, and Regional Service ended in 2015.

With continued interest of residents and stakeholders, the MPU contemplated future Regional Service at Palomar. However, there are several factors that limit Regional Service, such as the runway length, design standards, pavement strength, aircraft parking areas, and passenger terminal capacity. The runway length and design standards are the most critical. Palomar has a single 4,897-foot runway. Within the contiguous United States, there are no airports with runways less than 5,000 feet that have commercial air service.

Regional Service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft could provide additional revenues to the Airport Enterprise Fund (AEF) from commercial landing fees, parking, and fuel flowage; restaurant and rental car concessions; and vehicle parking. Also, the FAA currently allocates \$150,000 in Airport Improvement Program Entitlement grant funding to Palomar annually, which would increase to a minimum of \$1 million, if Palomar were to have over 10,000 commercial passengers per year, using small, passenger aircraft. The FAA also allows commercial service airports to collect a Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) from airlines to help pay for needed capital improvements. PFCs could generate up to \$2 million in additional revenue annually.

In addition to more and closer air travel options, Regional Service at Palomar using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft also has potential economic benefits to employees, businesses, and municipalities in North County and the region. The McClellan-Palomar Airport Economic Impact Analysis Report<sup>1</sup> determined that, without Regional Service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft, Palomar currently supports 2,590 jobs and generates \$461 million in economic activity and \$72 million in tax revenue. Without further development, Palomar would support an estimated 3,380 jobs and generate \$596 million in economic activity and \$94 million in tax revenues in 2036. The MPU presented today forecasted the ability of the airport to accommodate up to 575,000 passengers annually, on small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft. In this scenario,

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<sup>1</sup> McClellan-Palomar Airport Economic Impact Analysis, 2021. ICF International, Inc. (Attachment I)

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Palomar's economic activity would almost double, with an estimated 6,720 jobs and generate \$1.0 billion in annual economic activity and \$160 million in annual tax revenues.

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On October 14, 2021, the Palomar Airport Advisory Committee recommended, by a vote of 8 Ayes, 0 Noes, and 0 Abstentions, with 1 absent and 0 vacant seats, that the Board of Supervisors approve the Airport Master Plan incorporating the D-III safety design standards with an 800-foot runway extension and associated Program Environmental Impact Report. Additionally, explore options with a keen focus on safety, sustainability, and noise.

**BACKGROUND**

The McClellan-Palomar Airport (Palomar) is one of eight airports operated by the County of San Diego (County) at no cost to the General Fund and is located in the City of Carlsbad. Palomar has approximately 300 based aircraft and accommodates 140,000 takeoffs and landings annually, for aircraft ranging in size from small propeller aircraft to business jets that can accommodate up to 20 passengers. Palomar serves the North County communities as a vital air transportation hub for people, goods, and services; a customs clearance airport for passengers and cargo; an emergency response facility for medical transport, aerial firefighting, disaster relief, and law enforcement; and an economic engine that supported over 2,590 local jobs and generates over \$72 million in tax revenues and \$461 million in economic activity in 2019 for the surrounding local communities, including Carlsbad, San Marcos, Vista, Oceanside, and Encinitas. When Palomar opened in 1959, the surrounding area consisted mainly of agricultural uses. Over the last 60 years, light industrial, commercial, and recreational uses have developed around the airport. The City of Carlsbad annexed the airport in 1978. Palomar is a federally funded public-use airport, and while the County owns and operates the ground facilities, aircraft in flight are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

**Master Plan Update/Program Environmental Impact Review Chronology**

On June 14, 2011 (10), at the request of aviation businesses, and with letters of support from the mayors of the North County cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista, the County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed staff to prepare a scope, budget, and timeline for a study thoroughly examining whether the Palomar runway could be extended. This initiative was prompted by the potential benefits of a runway extension: improved airport safety and efficiency, extended aircraft range, and increased economic benefits.

On September 28, 2011 (3), the Board directed staff to conduct a feasibility study, using an independent consultant, to determine if there were potential improvements, including extending the runway, that could make Palomar better and safer, while keeping in mind economic perspectives. On September 25, 2013 (2), the Board received the completed Feasibility Study for Potential Improvements to Palomar Airport Runway, dated August 1, 2013, prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Options from the Feasibility Study would be considered as part of an update to the Palomar Airport Master Plan (MPU). The Feasibility Study determined that the runway length at Palomar was not sufficient to allow users of Palomar to operate 30 to 70

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passenger aircraft efficiently, since it requires them to carry less fuel, passengers, and cargo than the aircraft would otherwise accommodate if the runway were longer. The Feasibility Study found that a longer runway would correct this, result in greater safety for aircraft currently using the airport, and potentially result in over \$163 million in additional economic benefits over a 20-year period to the San Diego region, and the City of Carlsbad, by creating jobs and increasing spending.

On December 16, 2015 (3), three options were presented for the Board's consideration. In addition to considering the findings of the Feasibility Study recommending a longer runway, the Board directed staff to proceed with updating the MPU, focusing on a C/D-III Airport Reference Code (ARC) classification (as further detailed in the Background Section of this Board Letter under Airport Design Standards) as the preferred design alternative, subject to the preparation of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).

After an extensive planning and public outreach process, with over 30 stakeholder groups, multiple Palomar Airport Advisory Committee (PAAC) meetings, a dedicated project website, stakeholder presentations with user groups, community groups, cities, three public workshops, and almost 2,200 emails to interested parties, on October 10, 2018 (1) the Board adopted the MPU and provided direction on the classification of the MPU, selecting D-III design standards with a phased 800-foot runway extension, and certified the associated PEIR.

On November 6, 2018, Citizens for a Friendly Airport filed a petition for Writ of Mandate and complaint, challenging the Board's decision (Case No. 37-2018-00057624), alleging there were deficiencies in the PEIR, and the County needed to obtain an amendment to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Palomar Airport issued by the City of Carlsbad.

On January 26, 2021, the Superior Court (Court) filed a Minute Order upholding the PEIR analysis and dismissing the claims, except on two items. Specifically, the Court ruled that the County adequately analyzed the effects on traffic, greenhouse gas/climate change, energy, and that the PEIR used an appropriate threshold of significance for noise and adequately analyzed potential noise from commercial and non-commercial aircraft operations. While the Court determined the noise analysis completed for the PEIR was generally adequate, the Court found the PEIR should have included additional noise analysis for areas farther from Palomar, specifically for areas where residents reported noise concerns during the public comment periods. In addition, the Court ruled that an amendment to the CUP with the City of Carlsbad must be sought to implement the D-III Modified Standards Compliance Alternative. On March 4, 2021, the Court ordered the County to set aside all approvals associated with the October 10, 2018, approval of the MPU, certification for the PEIR, and related actions within 60 days. Accordingly, on May 5, 2021, the Board rescinded the MPU and de-certified the PEIR and related environmental findings.

The County has now completed the PEIR's additional noise analysis and updated the PEIR and MPU to address the need to seek an amendment to the CUP prior to implementation of an ARC design standard greater than B-II. Existing facilities, forecasts of future operations, aviation demand, and options for future facility development were all considered during the MPU process.

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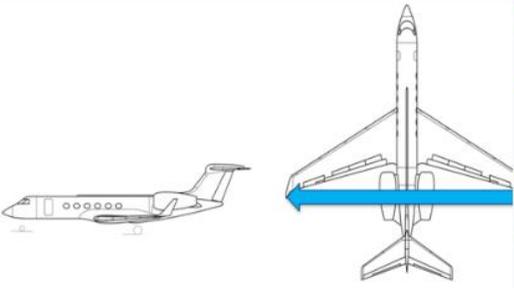
During the planning process, options and costs were developed based on aviation forecasts and environmental impacts were analyzed.

This is a request for the Board to adopt the MPU. A current and approved MPU is required for Palomar to be eligible for up to 90% FAA grant funding for safety enhancements and improvements to existing facilities. Through the development of the MPU, several options for design standards were developed and are included for the Board’s consideration. This is also a request to certify the associated PEIR and to provide direction on integrating sustainability options. If the Board does not adopt the MPU and certify the PEIR, Palomar would have no current development plan, safety enhancements would be delayed, and the County would not be eligible for available federal grant funding to improve Palomar.

**Airport Master Plan**

The key facility planning document for an airport is a master plan. With a planning horizon of 20 years, a master plan guides future airport development, including safety improvements. The purpose of a master plan update is to provide a developmental framework that meets existing and future aviation demand in a safe and cost-effective manner. A master plan further considers environmental, socioeconomic, and community development factors. The objective is to develop a planning road map for the future that is flexible, with an emphasis on safety. Market trends, land use opportunities and constraints, phasing, and financial feasibility, are all considered as part of the master plan process. The planning period covered by Palomar’s 1997 Master Plan ended in 2017.

**Airport Design Standards**

Critical Design Category Based on Aircraft Speed and Width		Critical Design Aircraft at Palomar			
 <p>Approach Speed (Shown by a Letter) <b>A, B, C, D, E</b></p> <p>Wingspan (Shown by a Roman Numeral) <b>I, II, III, IV, V</b></p>	<p><b>B-II</b></p> 	<p>91-120 knots</p>	<p>49-78 feet</p>	<p>Falcon 2000 (1997 Master Plan: Critical Aircraft)</p> <p>Wingspan: 63.5' Holds 19 passengers</p>	
		<p>141-166 knots</p>	<p>79-117 feet</p>	<p>Gulfstream 650 (2018 Master Plan Update: Critical Aircraft)</p> <p>Wingspan: 99.7' Holds 18 passengers</p>	

FAA airport design standards and related Airport Reference Code (ARC), set the shape and size for critical parts of the airport. Runway length is important to ensure aircraft have adequate room to take off and land. The distance between the runway and taxiway is important to ensure that aircraft can move around the airport safely. And safety areas are important to ensure there is

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enough clear space around the runway to reduce the risk of damage or injury if an aircraft overruns the runway. All of these are components of airport design which lead to capital improvement projects identified in the MPU.

Design standards are categorized by an alpha-numeric code based on the airport’s Critical Aircraft. The FAA defines Critical Aircraft as the fastest and largest aircraft with over 500 takeoffs and landings per year currently using the airport. The letter is determined by the aircraft’s approach speed, and the number is determined by its wingspan. The higher the letter and number, the faster and larger the aircraft, and the more space is desired around the runway through airport design standards to enhance their safety. A comparison of B-II versus D-III design standards for safety areas, object free areas and separation distance is provided below:

<b>Runway Design Standard</b>	<b>B-II</b>	<b>D-III</b>
Runway Safety Area Length	300'	1000'
Runway Safety Area Width	150'	500'
Runway Object Free Area Length	300'	1000'
Runway Object Free Area Width	500'	800'
Distance between Runway & Taxiway	240'	400'

The Critical Aircraft in the previous master plan, as determined by the FAA, was a Falcon 2000, which is categorized as a B-II. This type of aircraft holds 19 passengers. Now, with over 700 takeoffs and landings per year, Palomar’s Critical Aircraft, as determined by the FAA, is the Gulfstream 500/600 series business jet, categorized as a D-III, which holds 18 passengers, but has a longer wingspan and faster approach speed than a Falcon 2000. However, the airport still only meets B-II design standards. It is important to note, 40% of the business jets currently based at Palomar exceed the B-II design standards.

While the County cannot control what types of aircraft use Palomar (only the FAA has this authority), the County can improve safety for aircraft currently using the airport. Based on the Critical Aircraft currently using the airport and depending on the direction received from the Board at today’s hearing, the proposed MPU includes improvements to meet D-III design standards. These improvements do not expand Palomar; rather, the airport would be reconfigured within the existing property boundaries.

**Aviation Forecasts**

Aviation forecasts examine the level of demand expected to occur at an airport over a 20-year planning period and are used to guide design and layout options and to determine the environmental impacts. The MPU contains several types of forecasts including the number of passenger enplanements, based aircraft, and aircraft operations. Actual activity that will be achieved in future years may differ from the forecasts developed in this planning document because of future changes in local conditions, dynamics of the airline and general aviation

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industries, and economic and political changes for the local area and nation as a whole. The FAA has reviewed and approved the aviation forecasts in the MPU.

The MPU includes three scenarios: a baseline forecast, and two Planning Activity Level (PAL) forecast scenarios (PAL 1 and PAL 2) that reflect the return of commercial service using small, regional 30 to 70 passenger aircraft. The forecasts are intended for facility planning to assist in determining appropriate facility requirements. The forecast includes the number of commercial passengers, the number of takeoffs and landings, and anticipated aircraft sizes, with PAL 1 based on the current terminal capacity and PAL 2 reflecting regional airport passenger needs (See Attachment J).

**Key Components of the Master Plan Update**

One of the main objectives of a Master Plan is to identify the appropriate FAA airport design standards, which are primarily focused on safety and based on the Critical Aircraft that currently use the airport. These design standards set dimensional requirements on an airport, such as the separation distance between taxiways and runways, and the size of certain areas protecting the safety of aircraft operations and passengers.

**Main Airport Design Features for Consideration**

The MPU considers four main airport design features to make additional enhancements within the boundaries of the existing airport property line to improve the operational safety of aircraft currently using Palomar. Additional details regarding these features and a summary of how they were considered in the MPU are included in Attachment L.

- 1) **Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS):** Construction of EMAS provides an additional safety feature to assist with stopping aircraft in an emergency. An EMAS is a bed of crushable material designed to absorb the energy and stop an aircraft overrunning a runway, much like a runaway truck ramp.
- 2) **Runway Extension:** Extending the runway would increase the operational utility of aircraft, improve the potential for future commercial air carrier service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft, and provide a larger margin of safety for all aircraft using the airport. A runway extension would also reduce aircraft noise for communities west of Palomar because it would allow most aircraft to increase altitude sooner after takeoff. By increasing altitude sooner, sound from the aircraft is quieter to people on the ground.
- 3) **Runway and Taxiway Shift:** Shifting the runway to the north increases the distance between the runway and taxiway to meet D-III design standards. This provides needed wingtip clearance between aircraft operating on the runway and taxiway.
- 4) **Runway Protection Zones (RPZ):** RPZs are located beyond the ends of the runway and serve to enhance the protection of people and property on the ground. The sizes of RPZs are defined by FAA design standards and are based on the Critical Aircraft that currently use the airport. The FAA notes that while it is desirable to clear all objects from the RPZ, it acknowledges that some uses are permitted with conditions while others are prohibited. RPZ impacts for the various options are considered in the MPU (Attachment H).

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**OPTIONS FOR BOARD DIRECTION:**

**1. Airport Design Standard Options for the Palomar Master Plan Update**

An important goal of the MPU was to keep all projects on Palomar’s existing property. The MPU includes six options for airport design standards for the future classification of Palomar. Three of the options did not meet the objectives of the MPU because the improvements were not within the existing airport boundary or would have adversely impacted existing airport businesses. Therefore, the following three options were selected as the most viable for the future of Palomar and are being presented as the three options for airport design standards for Board consideration. All funding allocations are estimated, and federal or other grant funding would be subject to review and viability at the time-specific projects are presented to the FAA on the Airport Capital Improvement Plan.

Airport Design Standard Options (Pick One)	Runway Extension Options (Pick One)	Cost	Considerations
<b>Option A. B-II Enhanced Facility</b>	1. None	\$26.8M (FAA contributions \$24.2M, AEF contributions \$2.6M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Design Standards Enhanced with EMAS (like a runaway truck ramp for aircraft) and a potential runway extension.</li> <li>• Considered in the development of the current MPU and PEIR.</li> <li>• Safety improvements are limited to EMAS.</li> <li>• If B-II option is selected, then FAA grant eligibility would be limited to B-II improvements.</li> <li>• Runway extension would help facilitate commercial air service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft.</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for additional AEF revenues, jobs, and economic growth.</li> <li>• Currently, when commercial aircraft larger than B-II are on the runway, no other aircraft larger than B-II can be on the taxiway. The restriction could mean time delays for larger aircraft.</li> <li>• Runway extension options beyond 200 feet will require mitigation measures before any construction over the landfill area may be considered feasible.</li> <li>• The RPZs are currently larger than the FAA requires and can be reduced under B-II. If the County later decides to pursue D-III, RPZ required for the D-III Alternative could create renewed use restrictions on neighboring properties.</li> </ul>
<b>Option B. B-II Enhanced Facility Now and Condition D-III Modified Standards Com</b>	2. 200 feet	\$41.7M (FAA \$37.5M, AEF \$4.2M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This option is the same as option A with the addition of conditioning future D-III Modified Standards Compliance and a runway extension of 370-foot minimum to 800-foot maximum on addressing the CUP and RPZ requirements and returning to the BOS.</li> </ul>
	3. up to 900 feet	\$96.1M (FAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to land constraints, to implement the D-III design standards, a small</li> </ul>

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<b>pliance in the Future</b>		\$37.6M, AEF and other \$58.5M)	modification to the design standards for the Runway Object Free Area is required.
	1. None	\$26.8M (FAA \$24.2M, AEF \$2.6M) *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAA has identified this “D-III Modified Standards Compliance” as the preferred option.</li> <li>This option allows the County to benefit from the effort made to date in developing the current MPU and PEIR and provides the opportunity to achieve D-III design standards in the future under the current PEIR.</li> <li>Prior to implementing D-III, safety improvements are limited to EMAS.</li> </ul>
	2. 200 feet	\$41.7M (FAA \$37.5M, AEF \$4.2M) *	*Costs do not include the D-III option in the future.
	3. up to 900 feet	\$96.1M (FAA \$37.6M, AEF and other \$58.5M) *	
<b>Option C: D-III Modified Standards Compliance</b>	1. 370 feet	\$91.3M (FAA \$73.8M, AEF and other \$17.5M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve MPU with DIII Modified Standards Compliance and a runway extension.</li> <li>Considered in the development of the current MPU and PEIR.</li> <li>EMAS required on the west end of the runway to meet design standards.</li> <li>The runway would shift north by 123’ and the taxiway would shift north by 19’. The shift north would result in the relocation of over 30 small general aviation aircraft to the south side of Palomar and would eliminate the self-service fuel facility on the north ramp. These smaller aircraft could be accommodated on the south side of Palomar and the relocation would be phased as space became available.</li> </ul>
	2. 800 feet	\$101.0M (FAA \$71.6M, AEF and other \$29.4M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes 370’ extension to minimize the effects of new RPZs on private properties. One building would be affected with the 370’ extension. Any runway extension less than 370’ would place a second office building into the RPZ.</li> <li>Safety improvements meet the design standards for the aircraft currently using Palomar.</li> <li>FAA grant eligibility is broadened to D-III and runway extension projects.</li> <li>FAA restrictions on commercial air carrier aircraft would be lifted and the probability of commercial air carrier service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft is improved.</li> <li>Opportunities for additional AEF revenues, and growth in jobs and economy.</li> <li>To accommodate the D-III improvements, four Modifications of Standards will need to be presented to the FAA for approval.</li> <li>The D-III Alternative would require seeking an amendment to the CUP from the City of Carlsbad.</li> <li>Runway extension options beyond 200 feet will require mitigation measures before any construction over the landfill area may be considered feasible.</li> </ul>

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**2. Master Plan Update Options:**

Option A: Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Master Plan Update based on the option selected above under Recommendation 1 related to airport design standards, including a potential runway extension, together with the actions in Item 3 below.

Option B: Do not adopt the Master Plan Update and Evaluate Other Airport Classification Considerations **(4 Votes):**

- Do not approve existing MPU/PEIR, and direct staff to evaluate other airport classification options and return to the Board for further guidance upon evaluation.
- Establish appropriations of \$1,100,000 in the Airport Enterprise Fund (AEF).
- Cost for evaluation only – does not include any potential improvements.
- Until an MPU and PEIR are completed and approved by the Board, there will be no safety standards improvements, and grant funding, commercial service and growth in jobs and economy, will be limited.

**3. Certify and Adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update Environmental Documents:**

If the Board adopts the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update (Attachment H), then together with its action to adopt the MPU, certify that the Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), SCH No. 2016021105 has been completed in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines, that the Final PEIR was presented to the Board, that the Board reviewed and considered the information contained therein, and that the Final PEIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board (Attachment B); **AND**

- A. Adopt the Findings Concerning Mitigation of Significant Environmental Effects pursuant to Section 15091 of CEQA Guidelines (Attachment C); **AND**
- B. Adopt the Statement of Location and Custodian of Record (Attachment E); **AND**
- C. Adopt the decision and explanation regarding recirculation of draft PEIR (Attachment F); **AND**
- D. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program prepared in accordance with Section 15097 of CEQA Guidelines (Attachment G).

**4. Airport Sustainability Measures:**

In recent years, the State and County have made addressing climate change and sustainability two of the top priorities affecting our communities. On January 13, 2021 (5), the Board directed staff to ensure the Climate Action Plan Update (CAP Update) will meet and exceed Senate Bill 32 greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030 and establish actions to meet a goal of net zero

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carbon emissions by 2035-2045. The CAP Update applies to the unincorporated area of the county and County facilities throughout the region. On January 27, 2021(3), the Board directed the creation of a Regional Decarbonization Framework (Framework) to look at ways to reduce carbon throughout the region. The Framework will provide the emissions generated by industry sectors throughout the region and provide implementation measures recommended for the decarbonization of buildings that could be used by County facilities such as airports. Planning, coordinating, and implementing effective sustainability objectives and measures is crucial to reducing the County's impact and ensuring safe and healthy communities. While the MPU created a blueprint for development at Palomar over the next 20-year planning cycle, it did not initially incorporate or address sustainability objectives. As part of the County's consideration of the MPU in 2021, the Department of Public Works (DPW) has identified new opportunities to include sustainability objectives in the planning process.

One of the most recent evolutions in the aviation industry is the development of electric powered aircraft. The trade organization for the world's airlines has committed to transitioning to Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050, which will require transformational change. United Airlines, for example, recently announced that it has ordered a fleet of 19-seat electric aircraft that are expected to enter service as soon as 2026. Not only would electric aircraft eliminate direct carbon emissions, but they could also reduce noise by nearly 70 percent. These new aircraft will require specialized support equipment and handling procedures, and airports will be pivotal to the successful operation of these aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has provided grant funding in the past for pilot projects to demonstrate new technologies and identify efficient methods, best practices, and regulatory changes needed for adapting or integrating them. The County of San Diego and the FAA are interested in working cooperatively on a pilot project to explore the opportunities of electric and bio-fuel aircraft and their potential for reducing emissions. As an early adopter of the technology, County Airports will be well positioned to be a leader in sustainability.

Through continued coordination with other County sustainability efforts such as the CAP Update and Regional Decarbonization Framework, as well as research on the latest innovations in aviation sustainability, staff has developed three options for the Board's consideration. These sustainability options would explore opportunities for potential leadership related to County and tenant facilities and/or operations, aircraft operations, and ground transportation. Some examples of the sustainability opportunities may include green infrastructure, projects to help achieve zero net energy, partnerships on regional advanced air mobility, incentivizing sustainability measures in existing and new leases, exploring the use of sustainable aviation fuels, potential infrastructure for electric powered aircraft, and creating intermodal transportation connectivity. These opportunities would be explored in each of the options below:

**Option A: McClellan-Palomar Airport Sustainability Plan:** This option would direct staff to prepare a sustainability plan specifically for Palomar. If this option is selected, the sustainability plan would supplement the Master Plan by identifying potential capital improvements and initiatives at Palomar to facilitate and promote

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sustainability. Any new sustainability projects would be analyzed for potential environmental impacts. This is projected to take 12-18 months at a cost of \$500,000 or more.

**Option B: County Airports System Sustainability Plan:** This option would direct staff to prepare a sustainability plan that addresses all eight County Airports with a priority on implementing sustainability measures for Palomar. If this option is selected, the sustainability plan would identify potential capital improvements and initiatives at all County-owned airports, including Palomar, to facilitate and promote sustainability. Any new sustainability projects would be analyzed for potential environmental impacts. This is projected to take 18-24 months at a cost of \$1,000,000 or more. Staff recommends the Board select this option.

**5. Inclusion of a sustainability plan with a New Master Plan for McClellan-Palomar Airport:**

If the Board does not adopt the McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update, then this option would direct staff to begin preparation of a new Master Plan for Palomar that integrates sustainability into its recommended improvements. This would require revising the aviation forecast, which requires FAA approval. In addition, a new environmental analysis pursuant to CEQA would be required prior to approval. This is projected to take 36-48 months at a cost of \$4,500,000 or more. **(4 Votes)**

**San Diego Forward: 2021 Regional Plan**

Currently, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is proposing the Carlsbad Palomar Mobility Hub in the San Diego Forward: 2021 Regional Plan (Regional Plan). This Mobility Hub has been identified as a major employment center due to its close proximity to the coast and Palomar. Mobility Hubs are places of connectivity where different travel options – walking, biking, transit, and shared mobility – come together. Although airport property improvements are not part of the SANDAG Regional Plan, SANDAG has identified several improvements to support a transit access option, including improvements on North County Transit District Route 445 to serve the airport terminal for more direct access to the terminal and connect to COASTER service at the Carlsbad Poinsettia Station.

**Stakeholder Outreach and Public Engagement**

The County's stakeholder outreach for the MPU began in 2014, and by the date of the prior project approvals in 2018, staff had engaged with over 30 stakeholder groups (tenants, industry, and local/federal agencies). Outreach efforts included multiple PAAC meetings, a project website, stakeholder presentations, and three public workshops. Interested members of the public signed up to receive notices about the MPU, and there were almost 2,200 email addresses in the project e-blasts. There were opportunities for the public to give input regarding impacts during the preparation of the PEIR, including three public workshops and public comment periods.

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In 2021, the MPU and PEIR were revised based on the Court ruling and made available to the public on September 14, 2021, both on the project website and in hard copy. The public was notified of the available documents and the re-start of the planning process through email notifications, letters, and direct correspondence with nearly 40 key stakeholders, including airport user groups, community groups, and neighboring cities. Staff held 21 focused one-on-one meetings with stakeholders. During those one-on-one meetings, airport users and aviation supporters such as Taos Air and Qualcomm, wanted to ensure they could continue to use the airport safely now and in the future and that capital improvements support commercial service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft. The business community, including the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce and local business owners, want to support the economic development role of the airport. Residents around the airport have a range of opinions from concerns about noise levels and the flight patterns of aircraft to wanting commercial service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft at the airport. Staff has also coordinated with neighboring cities on the MPU and PEIR.

On September 29, 2021, staff held a virtual informational meeting where the County encouraged public input through a survey on four related topics: the role of the airport in the community and in the region, safety enhancements, and airport sustainability. Approximately 85 people participated in the meeting, which was presented in both English and Spanish. At the conclusion of the meeting, the survey was opened to the public and over 350 survey responses were received.

A range of survey responses were received representing the diversity of viewpoints in the community. Regarding Palomar's role, public input ranged from bringing back commercial service using small, regional, 30 to 70 passenger aircraft, continuing to support private and general aviation and emergency services, increasing the airport's economic impact, keeping the airport in its current role and size with no significant changes, or having the airport play no role in the community or region. Regarding safety, comments ranged from the airport is currently safe to increasing safety to the extent possible. There was interest in both not extending the runway and extending the runway. Regarding sustainability, responses ranged from the airport cannot be sustainable to ways to minimize the airport's carbon footprint, recycling, reducing noise and air pollution, restricting aircraft operations, and encouraging electric vehicles and aircraft as well as sustainable aviation fuels.

In addition to the virtual informational meeting, staff distributed a mailer to over 750 addresses and five rounds of updates to over 3,000 interested parties via email, and ensured the public was notified in advance of opportunities to participate and engage with County staff. Staff presented at the October 14, 2021, PAAC meeting, which was attended by 18 members of the public, to review the changes made to the MPU and PEIR and to seek a PAAC recommendation to the Board on the MPU, PEIR, and sustainability. PAAC voted unanimously in favor of approving the MPU and PEIR and pursuing options for sustainability.

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**Environmental Review Process**

The environmental review process started in 2016 when a Notice of Preparation for the PEIR was circulated for a 30-day public review starting February 29, 2016. The Draft PEIR and the Draft MPU were then circulated for a 61-day public comment period. Based on the comments received during the public review period, the County elected to revise and recirculate portions of the PEIR, including Biological Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy Use and Consumption, to clarify and strengthen the analysis and receive additional public input. The County received and responded to a total of 138 comment letters from agencies, organizations, and individuals regarding the PEIR and MPU during the initial and recirculated PEIR public review periods.

In response to the Court's decision on January 26, 2021, the County completed additional noise analysis, which is now included in the PEIR. Upon receiving the Court's decision, County staff reviewed all 138 PEIR comment letters (as well as 88 comment letters received in 2016 during the Notice of Preparation review period). Staff then identified which ones expressed a concern with aircraft-related noise. A combined total of 66 locations were identified and included in the additional noise analysis, which demonstrated that none of the 66 locations would result in significant noise impacts under existing conditions, future conditions without the project, or future conditions with the project. Accordingly, the Response to Comments (Attachment D) has been updated to reflect this analysis.

In advance of the Board's scheduled hearing date on November 3, commenters including the City of Carlsbad submitted comments for the Board's consideration of the MPU and PEIR. In response to the comments, staff revised Chapter 1 (Project Description) of the PEIR to identify that the County would seek amendment to the CUP from the City of Carlsbad, should the decision be made to move to a design standard greater than B-II. During the MPU and PEIR development, the County solicited and obtained input on the MPU and PEIR from the City of Carlsbad throughout the planning process. The County also consulted with the City during the revision of the MPU and PEIR in response to the Court's order.

*Significant Impacts and Mitigation* - Potentially significant environmental effects identified in the PEIR include impacts to aesthetics and visual resources, biological resources, hazards, and hazardous materials, construction noise, and traffic. Strategies to minimize and mitigate these potential impacts are incorporated into the PEIR. The Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program of the PEIR (Attachment G) provides a mechanism for compliance with the mitigation measures. The PEIR concluded that impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level. The impacts that were found to be significant and mitigable as described in the PEIR, are further summarized in Attachment K.

*Less than Significant Impacts* - The PEIR evaluated other environmental resources including Air Quality, Energy Use, and Consumption, Land Use and Planning, Operational Noise, Public Services, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and the analysis concluded the MPU did not exceed thresholds of significance and would not result in significant environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

Potentially significant environmental effects identified in the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) include impacts to aesthetics and visual resources; biological resources; hazards and hazardous materials; construction noise; and traffic. Findings supported by substantial evidence have been made for each significant effect (Attachment C). Strategies to minimize and mitigate these potential impacts have been incorporated into the proposed program. The Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program (Attachment G), provides a mechanism for compliance with the mitigation measures. The PEIR concluded that these impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The PEIR discusses potential significant effects of the buildout of the Master Plan Update's (MPU) 16 anticipated improvements (including all the options described in the MPU) as a first-tier programmatic environmental review. When an individual MPU project is proposed, it will be examined using the PEIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15168(c). Regarding the sustainability options, any future projects identified through the development of a sustainability plan would require CEQA review prior to approval.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action supports the Operational Excellence and Sustainable Environments/Thriving Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego's (County) 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Airports provide infrastructure and facilities that serve the aviation community and the general public and play an important role in the local economy. Approval of the Master Plan Update would enhance the County's ongoing efforts to provide modern infrastructure, innovative technology, and appropriate resources to ensure that the County provides superior service delivery to customers. Carefully studying and analyzing proposed projects to ensure all impacts to environmental resources are mitigated contributes to a region that is healthy safe and thriving.

Respectfully submitted,



SARAH E. AGHASSI  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

*Note: Due to the size of the attachments, the documents are available online through the Clerk of the Board's website at [www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/cob/bosa.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/cob/bosa.html).*

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Final Program Environmental Impact Report
- C. Findings Concerning Mitigation of Significant Environmental Effects
- D. List of Commenters, Letters of Comment, and Response to Comments on the Program Environmental Impact Report

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- E. Statement of Location and Custodian of Record
- F. Decision and Explanation Re: Recirculation of the Program Environmental Impact Report
- G. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
- H. McClellan-Palomar Airport Master Plan Update
- I. McClellan-Palomar Airport Economic Impact Analysis
- J. Summary of Master Plan Update Forecast Scenarios
- K. Summary of Significant Mitigable Impacts
- L. Main Airport Design Features for Consideration
- M. Action Sheet