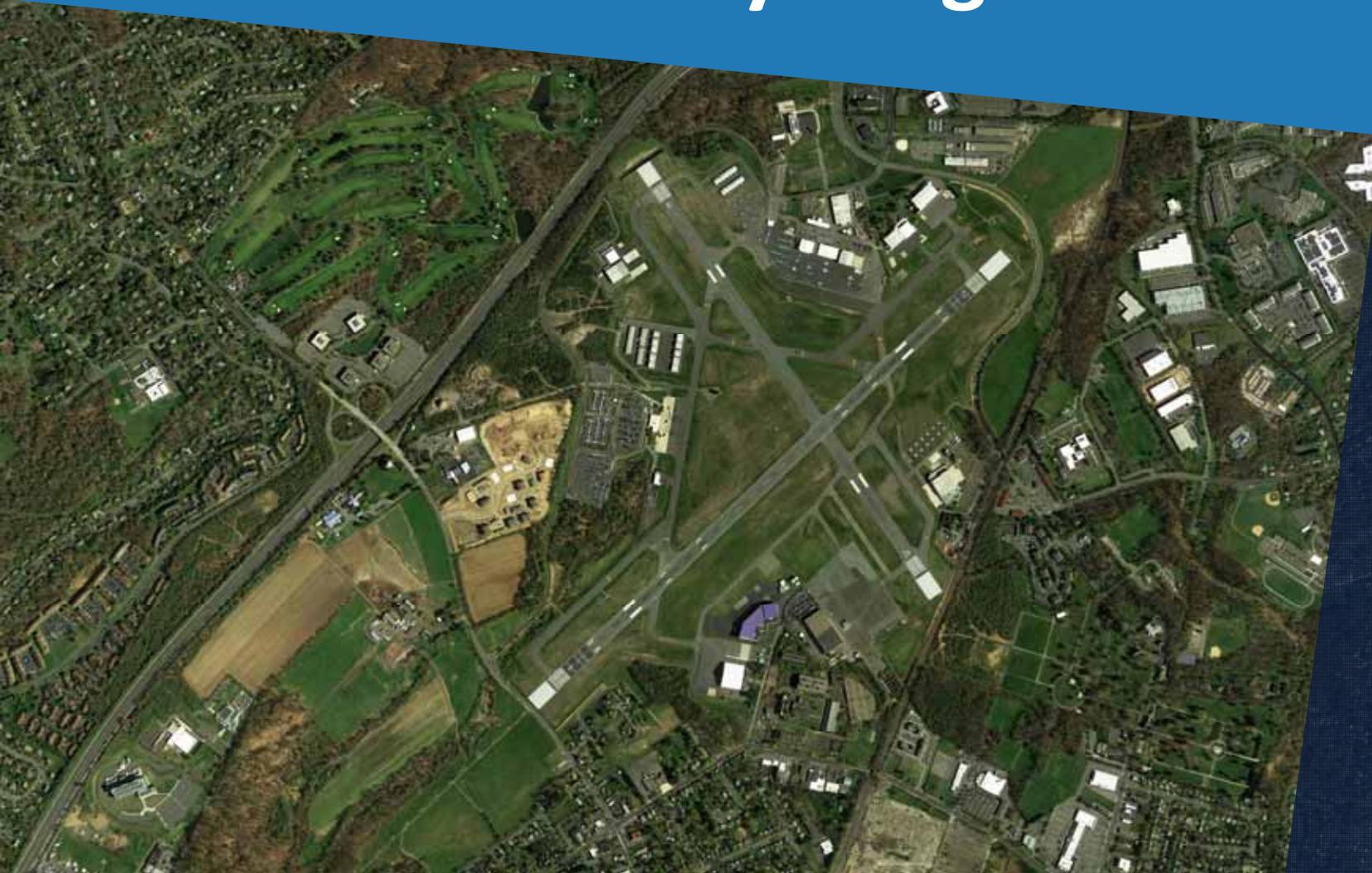


Environmental Assessment for RPZ and Obstruction Mitigation— Voluntary Program Off Airport



Presented by



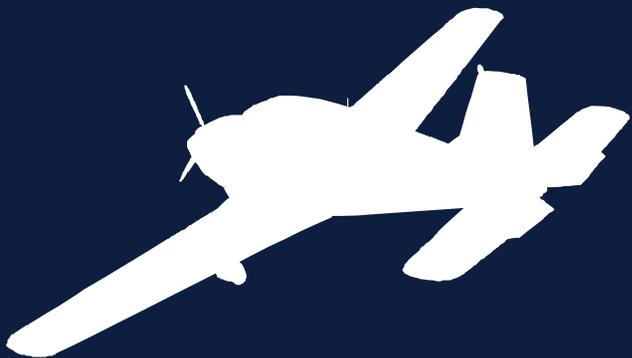
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Purpose of Project

- › Enhance safety of aircraft operations



- › Comply with FAA regulations, design standards, and grant assurances

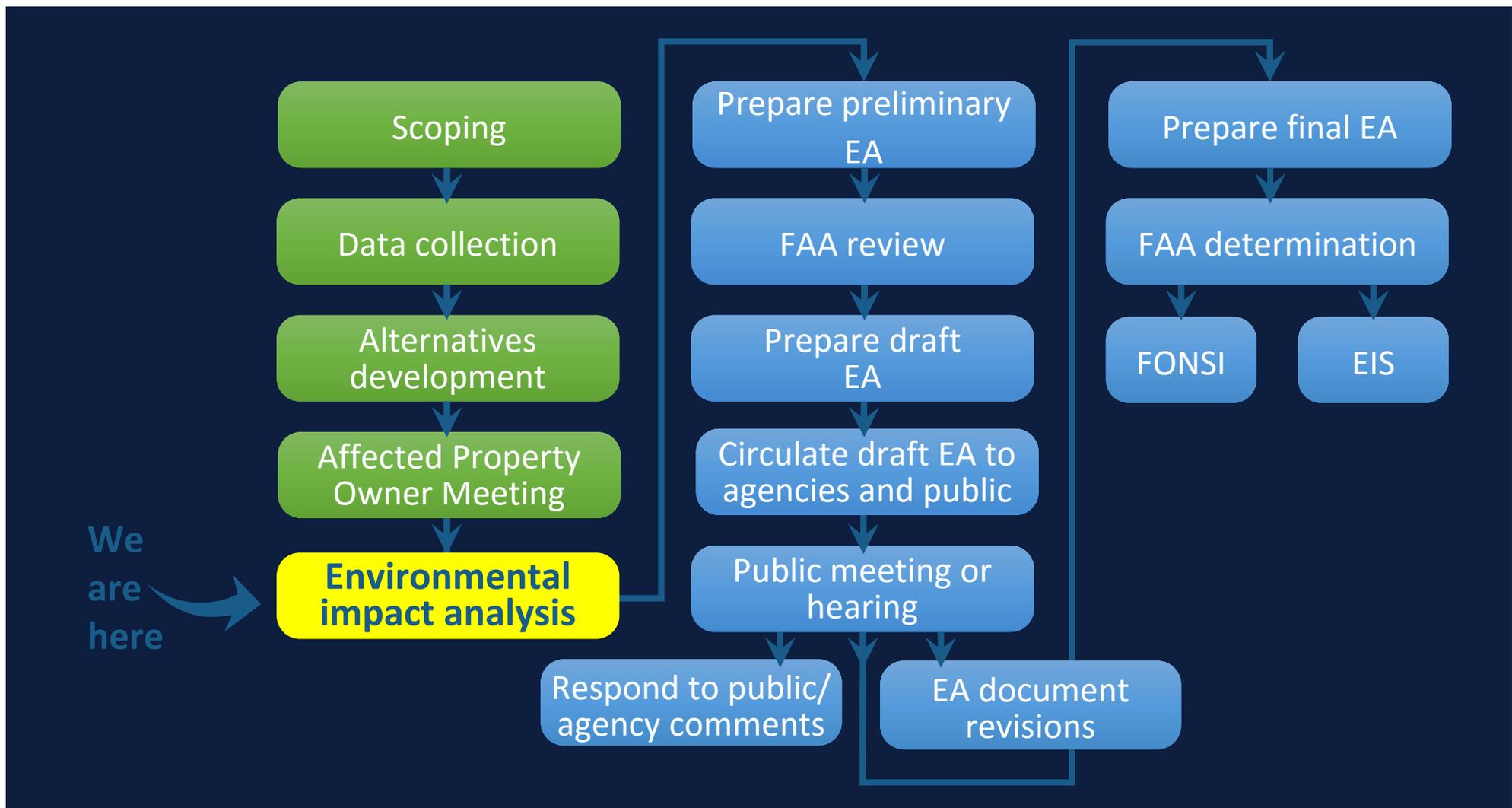


Proposed Project

- › On-airport obstruction mitigation

- › 100% Voluntary off airport land acquisition and obstruction mitigation

Environmental Assessment Process





Trenton Mercer Airport

Environmental Assessment for RPZ and Obstruction Mitigation

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the County removing trees around Trenton Mercer Airport?

FAA required an obstruction evaluation be completed for the airport and provided a grant in 2013. The obstruction evaluation was completed in 2015 and identified obstructions to protected airspace surfaces on and off airport property that included tree canopy areas, individual trees, residential structures, other (utility poles, road and railroad clearance, terrain).

Protecting the navigable airspace around airports is required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide a safe operating environment for aircraft as well as to comply with federal regulations, design standards, and grant assurances (obligations) that the airport sponsor signs when obtaining federal grants to fund airport improvement projects.

2. What is the RPZ (Runway Protection Zone) and Obstruction Mitigation Program?

It is a **voluntary** program for the removal of obstructions located off airport property (includes tree canopies, individual trees and residential structures). It also includes the removal of all obstructions identified on airport property, and the acquisition of land from those property owners that have residential structures within the RPZ or the structures are identified as obstructions to airspace surfaces.

3. What type of land acquisition is proposed?

The proposed alternative includes fee simple acquisition/relocation of residential property owners who have residential structures in the RPZ or the structures are identified as obstructions to airspace surfaces, or the acquisition of avigation easements on parcels containing tree obstructions. Some additional property owners with tree obstructions have requested to be included in the fee simple acquisition program. The County has submitted this request to the FAA and is currently waiting for a decision from the FAA.

4. What is an avigation easement?

An easement is permission granted by a property owner. It gives someone other than the property owner a right related to the property. Easements are usually recorded with the property title and are valid if there is a new property owner. Avigation easements are property rights acquired by an airport that can limit construction on property and allow the airport to remove any objects (trees or structures) that penetrate the FAA airspace surfaces.



5. What happens if obstructions are not addressed?

There are high priority obstructions that will significantly affect airport operations. The County has engaged in preliminary discussions with these property owners and they have indicated a willingness to participate in the program.

All other obstructions that are not addressed will be mitigated procedurally by the FAA.

6. What happens if affected property owners do not want to participate in the voluntary program? Will the County condemn?

No action will be taken, there will be no condemnation.

7. What kind of trees will be replanted?

The property owner will have the option to select from a list of native, low-growing species of trees and/or shrubs. The property owner will be shown options for replacement plantings. Whenever possible, the replacement plantings are staggered to give as much initial coverage as possible for the balled and bur lapped nursery grown trees.

8. Where will trees be replanted?

A Landscape Architect will prepare a Tree replanting plan for each property with input from the property owner. Trees will generally be replanted in the areas where they are removed. If it's determined that it isn't feasible to replant in the same area (e.g., due to overcrowding concerns), the County will make every effort to replant in the vicinity of the area that is cleared.

9. When will trees be removed?

The tree removal project will take place in phases from 2020 through 2025.

10. Can the trees be topped rather than removed?

Topping of trees is not the preferred method. The U.S Department of Agriculture warns against the topping of trees because this makes them more prone to decay and rot from organisms entering the wounds on the top of the tree, and there is a recurring need for tree maintenance to make sure tree growth does not penetrate the instrument or visual protection surfaces for the airport and adversely affect airport operation

11. For areas where trees provide a visual buffer from the airport, what steps will be taken to maintain that buffer?

Vegetation that provides a visual buffer from the airport that is removed will be replaced during the replanting program.



12. What alternatives have been considered?

Eight alternatives have been considered. The alternatives range from no-action, removing all obstructions, reduced obstruction removal options to minimize impacts to off airport property owners, and an alternative to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas. The proposed alternative under review by the FAA reduces off airport obstruction removal and incorporates additional fee simple acquisition of residential properties based on property owner feedback received at the May 2017 property owner meetings.

13. Why hasn't there been any public meetings?

The project is currently at the alternatives development stage of the Environmental Assessment (EA). In accordance with the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines, Affected Property Owner's meetings were held on May 15 and 16, 2017 to notify them of the project, present a preferred alternative, address comments and concerns the affected property owners had in regards to impacts to their properties and land acquisition options. A Public Meeting will be held once the Draft EA has been completed and reviewed by the FAA. This will also include a 30-day public review and comment period prior to the meeting.

14. How much tree clearing is taking place?

The Proposed Alternative reduces the amount of tree removal by 25% compared to the total amount of obstructions initially identified. It includes the removal of multiple separate tree canopy areas totaling 92 acres. Approximately 73% or 67 acres of separate tree canopy areas are located on airport property and 27% or 25 acres of separate tree canopy areas are located off airport on numerous parcels. In addition, approximately 180 individual trees are proposed to be removed with 29% or 53 trees being removed on airport property, 11% or 19 trees on commercial properties, and 60% or 108 trees on numerous residential properties.

15. If all obstructions are addressed will further obstruction removal be required in the future?

The proposed alternative reduces the amount of obstructions recommended for removal in order to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and off airport properties. This means that some obstructions will remain. These trees will continue to grow and could affect the safety of some airport operations in the future. At that time these trees would need to be addressed. In addition, FAA regulations or standards may change.

16. Are the obstructions being removed to accommodate projects on the master plan?

No, the obstructions are being removed to enhance the safety of airport operations and comply with federal regulations, design standards, and grant assurances for **existing** airport conditions.



17. Tree removal will result in the loss of wildlife in the area, how are these impacts being addressed?

To minimize impacts to wildlife, tree removal typically takes place in winter months. In addition, the tree replanting program would provide replacement habitat for wildlife.

18. Who will remove the trees and how will they be removed?

Per FAA requirements the County will bid the contract out and the lowest qualified bidder will remove trees and restore area in accordance with property owner approved replanting plan and be responsible for the removal or all debris.

19. May I grant a right of entry or license to remove the trees rather than require an easement?

No, an easement is the instrument the FAA requires that an airport have because a right of entry or license is only temporary while an easement is perpetual.

20. Will I have salvage rights to the trees?

This can be addressed on a case by case basis, but generally salvage rights can be extended assuming that the property owners agree to indemnify and hold the airport, County, FAA, its agents and consultants harmless from any liability or expense after the trees are cut and stacked on the property. This should be discussed during development of the replanting plan.

21. How will the airport determine the value for my property for fee simple acquisition?

Prior to making an offer to purchase, the airport owner will arrange for a competent, independent, real property appraiser familiar with local property values to appraise your property. The appraiser will inspect your property and set forth an opinion of its current fair market value in a formal appraisal report. This report will be reviewed by a review appraiser for conformance to acceptable appraisal standards and FAA requirements. After the report is approved, it is used as the basis for the airport owners written offer to purchase your property.

22. Will I have a chance to meet with the appraiser?

Yes. You will be invited to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of your property. You should accompany the appraiser and point out any special features you feel may add to the value of your property and furnish any information that may be requested. If you are unable to meet with the appraiser, you may wish to send a qualified representative who is familiar with your property.

23. After the Airport acquires fee title to my property, will I be required to move immediately?

No. The airport owner will give you or your tenants 90 days' written notice prior to its requiring that you move. No person will be required to move unless at least one comparable replacement dwelling has been made available. It is essential that before moving and committing yourself to a replacement dwelling, you contact the airport owner to be sure that everything is in proper order so as not to jeopardize any relocation payments for which you may be eligible.



24. How are easement rights valued and how will I be compensated?

The compensation paid to the property owner for an avigation easement is based upon the difference between the fair market value of the property without the avigation easement and with the avigation easement as determined by a qualified independent real estate appraiser. Factors to be considered by the appraiser will include height limitations that need to be maintained on the property as determined by the grantee and the number of obstructions (typically trees) that need to be maintained by the grantee on the property. A consultant will arrange a meeting with the individual property owners to address the specific impact on their property.