



DATE: November 1, 2021

MEMO TO: Terry Wilke, Chair
Planning Committee

FROM: Alex Ty Kovach
Executive Director

REQUEST: Provide policy direction regarding an invitation from the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) to serve as a Cooperating Agency with the FAA, within the context of the forthcoming Draft Environmental Assessment (“EA”) related to the Waukegan Port District’s (“WPD”) planned improvements at Waukegan National Airport (the “Airport”).

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Conservation and Communication, Education and Outreach.

FINANCIAL DATA: There is no financial impact at this time.

BACKGROUND: The Lake County Forest Preserve District has been in discussions for several years with the WPD regarding WPD’s plans to make improvements, including building a new runway, at the Airport. In April 2017, the District approved a Letter of Intent (“LOI”) with WPD, which outlined the terms and conditions of a proposed Intergovernmental Agreement (“IGA”) between the WPD and the District. The provisions of the LOI related to any future property transfer are non-binding, but are intended to provide the framework for the parties’ negotiation of the IGA. The LOI remains in effect.

Since the 2017 LOI was approved, discussions and negotiations concerning the project have been ongoing between District staff and WPD staff. Throughout the process, the District staff and leadership have expressed to the WPD their strong interest in the results of the Draft EA. WPD anticipates that the Draft EA will be available in the First Quarter of 2022.

The FAA anticipates that certain environmental resources such as wetlands, floodplains, habitat for threatened and/or endangered species and streams could be impacted by the proposed improvements at the Airport. Because the District possesses special expertise with respect to environmental resources that are likely to be addressed in the EA, the FAA has invited the District to become a “Cooperating Agency”, which would allow (and require) the District to conduct early reviews of and comment on the Preliminary Draft EA documentation in advance of the release of the Draft EA for public review. The District would also be allowed to provide comments on potential environmental concerns related to WPD’s planned improvements at the Airport prior to publication of the Draft EA. In its letter inviting the District to participate as a Cooperating Agency, the FAA stated that the District will not be expected to write or otherwise produce any portion of the Draft EA. Acting as a Cooperating Agency does not compel the District to enter into any agreement with WPD.

The Preliminary Draft EA documentation will allow the District to review the environmental studies and related reports being produced that will make up the final Draft EA prior to its publication.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Corporate Counsel.