

Chicago Executive Airport (CEA)

Airport Master Plan Update

FAQ's

Who owns and operates the Chicago Executive Airport?

In 1986, with funding provided by the Federal Aviation Administration, the Village of Wheeling and City of Prospect Heights purchased the Airport from its then private owner. The Airport is governed and operates in accordance with an Intergovernmental Agreement entered into between the Village of Wheeling and the City of Prospect Heights. An appointed Board of Directors oversees Airport operations by a professional staff. The Airport is financially self-sufficient. Neither municipality provides financial support to the Airport. The Airport funding is generated from Airport revenue. There is no local taxpayer money expended on the operation of the Airport. CEA is a community asset that benefits from a coordinated approach with the sponsor communities.

What is an Airport Master Plan Update?

An Airport Master Plan Update is a planning document. Typically, for a 20-year planning horizon, CEA's Master Plan Update is proactive and identifies the plans for future facility needs well in advance of the actual need for the facilities. Much like a community comprehensive plan, this is done to ensure that CEA is prepared to accommodate future demand to avoid facing unfavorable effects due to insufficient facilities.

The CEA Master Plan was last updated in 1984, with a key outcome being an approach to bringing the airfield into compliance with the FAA safety regulations.

Who is preparing the Airport Master Plan Update?



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Who pays for the Airport Master Plan Update?

No municipal funds are expended on the Airport Master Plan Update. CEA pays for the project out of Airport revenues. The Airport Master Plan Update is eligible for federal and state reimbursement at 95%. No property taxes will increase due to CEA.

What has the approach been to the Airport Master Plan Update?

The Board of Directors of CEA have chosen to accomplish the planning effort in phases. The level of detail and complexity within the planning effort will increase as the process plays out. Moving deliberately will ensure transparency and community involvement.

Accomplishments to date – Phase I

In the Summer of 2014, the planning effort began to ensure that the communities are best able to leverage the airport as the asset it is while still complying with federal obligations. Phase I included a visioning process, and stakeholder engagement which contributed to the overall vision, purpose and need for the Airport Master Plan Update. Phase I was completed in Summer of 2015.

What was heard from Phase I?

- Airport development at CEA is economic development for the Village of Wheeling and City of Prospect Heights.
- Concerns heard:
 - Safety
 - Aircraft noise – CEA has moved forward with noise-related projects – these are separate and not being conducted by the Airport Master Plan Update team.
 - Impacts to the environment

Accomplishments to date – Phase II

Phase II of the Airport Master Plan Update was conducted in two parts.

- Part One – Forecast of Future Aviation Demand. CEA received required FAA approval in January 2017.
- Part Two – Facility Requirements. FAA is currently performing an on-going review.

During Phase II, user surveys and interviews were conducted with existing tenants, CEA users, as well as fractional and charter aircraft users at CEA.

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What was heard from Phase II?

- The primary constraint identified was runway length limitations.
- Through the surveys and interviews, it was confirmed that CEA is unique because it serves as the top Chicago metropolitan area reliever airport in both itinerant and local operations, yet users consider it to be constrained relative to comparable relievers in the nation.

Are there guiding principles for the Airport Master Plan Update?

During the Phase I visioning process, four guiding principles were set forth as a road map for future planning.

- Integration of the Airport within the local communities
- Fulfillment of the Airport's role
- Enhancement of Airport safety and compatibility
- Maintenance of financial viability

What are the components of an Airport Master Plan Update?

The Airport Master Plan Update process is guided by the FAA and ultimately results in projections of future aviation activity growth (Forecast) and preparation of an Airport Layout Plan (ALP).

The major technical elements of the CEA Airport Master Plan Update include the following:

- Inventory of Existing Airport Conditions and Facilities
- Forecast of Aviation Demand
- Demand/Capacity Analysis
- Facility Requirements and Identification of Issues
- Definition and Evaluation of Alternatives
- Environmental Overview of Proposed Development
- Airport Layout Plan
- Capital Improvement Program

What is a Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP)?

The SIP is a living document that serves as a blueprint for defining outreach tools and methods. The SIP also identifies roles and responsibilities of participants and establishes the timing of public involvement activities. The DRAFT SIP was available for review at the first Public Meeting.

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Will there be opportunities for public involvement?

Yes, there will be a public involvement program and the integration of communication tools and opportunities such as briefings, meetings and engagement programs to ensure that the approach to public involvement is efficient, frequent and accessible. The project team will consistently work with agencies, municipalities, airport users and the public.

Input is encouraged throughout the process and will be available in many ways and through several opportunities.

Examples include:

- Public Meetings (Open Houses)
- Newsletters/factsheets
- Website
- Social Media

A public involvement program bridges the gap between the Airport, local government and the public.

What is a Stakeholder Involvement Group?

To assist in the development of the Airport Master Plan Update and provide technical input at decision points, the project team has established a Stakeholder Involvement Group as a key way for the public's input to be represented.

A Stakeholder Involvement Group (SIG) consists of a balanced representation of community leaders from groups such as:

- Local Officials
- Agencies
- Civic Groups
- CEA Corporate Tenants
- CEA Fixed Based Operators
- CEA General Aviation
- Chamber of Commerce & Visitor and Convention Bureaus
- Economic Development
- Emergency Management
- State & Federal Elected Officials

SIG members will be asked to represent their respective agency or constituents and be the conduit of information exchange.

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What is an Airport Layout Plan (ALP)?

An Airport Layout Plan (ALP) is a set of scaled drawing depicting existing and proposed future facilities and property necessary to the operation and development of the airport. An ALP is a requirement of the FAA, and the ALP must be approved first, by the City of Prospect Heights and the Village of Wheeling and then by the FAA before further steps in the development process can begin. It should be noted that development is not guaranteed if future facilities are shown on the ALP.

How do I comment throughout the Airport Master Plan Update?

Public and stakeholder comment and input to the study are welcome. Comments on the Airport Master Plan Update can be filled out here: <https://www.chiexec.com/cea-master-plan/contact-us/>. All input on the Airport Master Plan Update will be reviewed and considered.

The public has the opportunity to provide comments at Open House meetings. The first Open House was held on December 4, 2018 and the second Open House is scheduled for July 11, 2019.

What are the next steps?

Airport master planning defines likely changes in future demand, identifies any missing or necessary facilities that would be required to meet that demand, develops a series of potential alternatives and then creates a Capital Improvement Program to prioritize key steps in the development of the preferred alternative.

Below is a process graphic that depicts Phase III major project elements.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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The Alternatives Development and Evaluation process is FAA-mandated. One key element of the process is including the No Build or “Do Nothing” alternative in the evaluation. The No Build scenario will be evaluated with each preferred alternative.

What is the anticipated timeline?

Below is an anticipated timeline that includes upcoming SIG Meetings, Public Information Meetings, and results of Phase III. We are currently preparing for the SIG #2 meeting.



What will the Airport Master Plan Update include?

The Airport Master Plan Update will include a Preferred Development Concept and the No Build Concept.

What is the Preferred Development Concept?

Several layouts will be created during the Airport Master Plan Update process. These layouts are called alternatives. Each alternative will be evaluated through a screening process. These alternatives will eventually be narrowed down to just one alternative, which is referred to as the Preferred Development Concept. This will be included into the Airport Master Plan Update.

What is a “No Build” Alternative?

A “No-Build” Runway Alternative will be included in the Airport Master Plan Update. No Build means that there is a possibility that the runway will not be expanded. If the No Build Alternative is chosen, the Airport Master Plan Update process will continue for the remainder of the Airport.

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What is being done about the noise?

Based on public feedback from previous Phase II of the Airport Master Plan Update, noise is a key concern surrounding the Airport. CEA completed a Noise Exposure Map (NEM) Update project in 2017 to understand current and projected noise levels around the Airport. The Residential Sound Insulation Program (RSIP) will kick off in 2019. The RSIP is funded by the FAA and is a separate project from the Master Plan Update.

Has noise gotten worse at the Airport?

No. In the past 30 years, noise has reduced by 30% (see chart below). This is due in part because aircraft have become quieter. The 65 DNL contour is the threshold used by FAA for determining potential RSIP qualification.

Area of Noise Impact			
YEAR	65 DNL	70 DNL	75 DNL
1987	898 Acres	414 Acres	212 Acres
2001	979 Acres	433 Acres	204 Acres
2006	852 Acres	406 Acres	191 Acres
2016	629 Acres	271 Acres	117 Acres
% REDUCTION	30%	35%	45%

DNL is the Day-Night Average Sound Level. It represents the total accumulation of all sound energy but spread out uniformly over a 24-hour period.

What are some of the safety improvements made at CEA?

Safety has always been the number one priority at CEA. For the past 30 years, every resource available has been used to keep the residents surrounding the airport safe. In 2015, CEA invested \$13.5M into the installation of an EMAS (Engineered Material Arresting System) system. An EMAS system involves lightweight, crushable concrete blocks that crush under the weight of an aircraft. Just three months after installation, the EMAS stopped an aircraft from entering Palatine Road. Because of the safety improvement, there were no injuries or fatalities.

Some additional safety improvements made at CEA include: numerous buildings and obstructions have been removed, full parallel taxiways have been constructed to reduce runway occupancy time, safety areas have been re-graded to meet FAA standards, and the primary runway at CEA was widened in 2002 to increase the margin of safety.

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If the runway were to be expanded, would this cause issues with stormwater?

No. Historically, stormwater management for development at CEA has been governed by a Master Drainage Study approved by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC). Currently, CEA provides the community benefit of 198 acre-feet of flood storage, greater than what is required by the Master Drainage Study. In the future, development at CEA will comply with applicable MWRDGC and FEMA regulations.

Currently, CEA actually helps regional stormwater. As a functioning tributary to the Des Plaines River, the Wheeling Drainage Ditch provides critical stormwater management control to Wheeling. The Airport not only realigned and widened the ditch to improve stormwater flows, but also converted areas of the airfield into temporary stormwater storage. Over 198 acre-feet of temporary stormwater detention has been provided by the Airport which enhances regional flood control. In flood events, the airfield itself functions as storage, while leaving the airfield safe and accessible to aircraft.

What would be some reasons to expand the runway?

The current runway length is 5,000 feet. When it rains or snows, some airplanes cannot operate because the required length for take-off or landing is not within the safety range for their equipment. This is also true on hot summer days. A runway extension would make operation of current equipment safer.

If you expand the runway, will larger planes come with it?

A longer runway would not result in commercial air service (airlines like United and Southwest) or major air cargo flights (like UPS or FedEx) at CEA. CEA intends to remain as a General Aviation airport. FAA regulations governing airports and airlines is stringent as commercial air passengers know. There has been no application to the FAA for commercial service, no airlines have expressed any interest in operating out of CEA, and FAA regulations would make commercial service virtually impossible.

Will there be economic development opportunities in the Airport Master Plan Update?

The Master Plan Update Phase III process focuses on economic development opportunities. Chicago Executive Airport is fully self-funded with no burden on tax payers. By ensuring airport land use compatibility, CEA promotes both aviation and non-aviation related businesses that provide jobs for residents and tax dollars for the City of Prospect Heights and the Village of Wheeling.

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[What are the tax benefits?](#)

In its current configuration, the CEA provides \$330 Million in regional economic benefit as well as \$2.3 Million in sales and real estate tax revenues. A key element of Phase III of the Airport Master Plan Update will be the identification of economic development opportunities. By ensuring airport land use compatibility, promotion of economic development and sustainable development patterns, CEA plays an integral part in supporting sustainability in the City of Prospect Heights and the Village of Wheeling, while ensuring the future financial viability of the airport.

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While an expanded runway may impact the existing tax base, it is anticipated that economic development associated with the expanded runway may offset some of the impacts. As we progress with Phase III of the Airport Master Plan Update, evaluation criteria for assessing runway alternatives will be developed and it is anticipated that cost, including impacts to the existing community tax base, and community impacts, including impacts to homes and public spaces, will be included in the analysis.

What is being done about potential environmental impacts?

Upon completion of the Airport Master Plan Update and approval of the ALP, if CEA intends to move any specific project forward for implementation, a detailed environmental study complying with NEPA is required by FAA. Air quality and environmental justice are two of many environmental components that would be studied. The project team will continue to balance the essential federal and state regulations, the needs of the surrounding communities and the future needs of the airport, while engaging stakeholders, like yourself, and seek input throughout the process.