

## **Section 2**

### **Purpose and Need**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

As set forth in Section 1, each of the three components is an independent project. Although all three components are considered in this EA to ensure that cumulative impacts, if any, are thoroughly analyzed, each requires a separate statement of purpose and need.

#### **2.2 Purpose and Need – Construction Component**

The purpose of the Construction Component is to provide a means to allow affected aircraft to take-off at heavier weights (thereby minimizing payload penalties) in all weather and temperature conditions than they do currently. This will result in providing enhanced and more reliable international nonstop service to customers using Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. This is a current need and will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

#### **2.3 Purpose and Need – Cross Complex Departures Component and Modified Departure Headings Component**

The purpose of the Cross Complex Departures Component and the Modified Departure Headings Component is to reduce taxi-out delay, thereby increasing schedule reliability and reducing delay associated with that portion of the flight that occurs on the ground at the Airport. This is a current need and will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

#### **2.4 Implementation of Proposed Project Not Anticipated to Affect Growth in Passengers or Operations**

Implementation of any Proposed Project component simultaneously or separately is not anticipated to affect growth in passengers or operations, as activity is forecast to grow in the same amount with or without implementation of the Proposed Project. Airlines performing international departures from Hartsfield-Jackson do so because of the large volume of passengers using the Airport due to the Airport's use as a hub and the cost efficiencies the airlines have attained by operating here.

While the specific number of aircraft expected to benefit from Construction Component implementation is not known, it is estimated to be between 15 and 30 departures per day. The exact number varies on a daily basis, as the number is dependent upon atmospheric conditions (primarily temperature) for a given summer day. The intent of the Construction Component is to provide capability for airlines to depart to currently served destinations with greater load, as well as serve farther destinations from Atlanta, on a *nonstop* basis.

Given the magnitude of the existing international operation at the Airport, it is expected that should airlines desire to serve more distant destinations from Atlanta nonstop than is currently possible without the Construction Component, these airlines would make a stop enroute to refuel. However, with the availability of additional long-range destinations that would be

made feasible due to the use of the Construction Component, this refueling stop is eliminated. Although the Construction Component is intended to benefit existing international passengers and operations, it is indeed possible that some limited number of additional international passengers (and aircraft) could be attracted to or routed through Atlanta.

These passengers and aircraft are included in the forecast of international activity. As stated previously, international activity is extremely important to the City of Atlanta. However, on an Airport-wide basis, the percentage of its activity is small. In the last five years, international passenger activity has ranged between 7 and 10 percent of total passengers. International aircraft activity has ranged between 5 and 7 percent of total aircraft handled.

In absolute terms, it is expected that approximately 750 departures annually would benefit from the Construction Component. The Airport has averaged approximately 455,000 to 495,000 annual departures between the years 2003 to 2008. Any passenger or departure growth associated with the 750 departures (less than 0.2 percent of annual departures) is minimal when compared to the existing 495,000 departures handled during calendar year 2007. It is expected that any environmental impact associated with the 750 departures when compared to the existing operation would be minimal also.

Similarly, the Airport has averaged accommodating between approximately 40 million and 45 million departing passengers annually during the years of 2003 to 2008. The number of passengers traveling on these 750 annual departures to be accommodated by the Construction Component would be approximately 210,000. It is expected that any environmental impact associated with these 210,000 passengers when compared to the existing operation would be minimal also.

Thus, tremendous incentive exists for the airlines to continue operating at Hartsfield-Jackson and conduct a large international operation with or without the Proposed Project. As stated above, implementation of each Proposed Project component improves customer service and allows the airlines to conduct these operations much more efficiently.

## **2.5 Requested Federal Action**

This evaluation has been prepared as an EA consistent with FAA Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*; FAA Order 1050.1E, *Policies and Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*; and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines. Due primarily to the Atlanta region's air quality status being classified as "moderate" nonattainment for ozone under the eight-hour standard and nonattainment for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, the Proposed Project is being evaluated as an EA with special attention given to the documentation of aircraft air quality and noise consequences. If thresholds of significance are projected to be exceeded, but would be reduced to below significant levels through mitigation, then the project could be approved as a mitigated finding of no significant impact (FONSI). If significant impacts are identified that cannot be mitigated below the level of significance thresholds, then additional analysis would be conducted through preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS).

Some comments received on the DEA were concerned with the appropriateness of preparing an EA in lieu of an EIS. The DOA reviewed FAA guidance contained in Chapter 5 of Order 1050.1E, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and determined that the

Proposed Project did not meet the EIS context or intensity criteria contained in Paragraph 501 of the Order. Additionally, the two components comprising the Proposed Project are consistent with FAA guidance as actions normally requiring an EA, per Paragraph 401. Paragraph 401k specifies runway extensions and Paragraph 401n specifies air traffic procedures routing traffic over noise sensitive areas at less than 3,000 feet above ground level as actions normally requiring an EA.

The requested federal actions contained in this EA include the FAA issuing a FONSI for the Proposed Project; ALP approval for the previously described items; and a determination that applicable project elements are eligible for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds and Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) without limitation. More specifically, the requested federal actions for each component are listed below.

### **2.5.1 Requested Federal Actions – Construction Component**

The requested federal actions to implement the Construction Component include a determination and unconditional ALP approval for the following:

1. Determination that applicable project elements are eligible for AIP funds and PFC use;
2. All activities associated with construction of the 500-foot Runway 27R extension;
3. All activities to facilitate the extension of Taxiway “L” and Taxiway “M” eastward to the new Runway 27R threshold;
4. Modification and/or relocation of FAA facilities affected by the extensions; and
5. Other miscellaneous supporting work to enable the extension and operation of Runway 27R.

### **2.5.2 Requested Federal Actions – Modified Departure Procedures**

The requested federal actions to implement the Modified Departure Procedures include approval for and/or performing the following:

1. Environmental approval of the Modified Departure Procedures analyzed; and
2. The FAA undertake all activities and approvals internal to the agency (such as, but not limited to, procedure design, flight inspection, charting, etc.) necessary to implement the Modified Departure Procedures.

## **2.6 Relationship to Recent Environmental Documentation and Other Projects at Hartsfield-Jackson**

After completing the Plan document in early 1999, the DOA created a construction program named the Hartsfield-Jackson Development Program (H-JDP). To implement H-JDP components that necessitate an ALP change requires FAA environmental approval. The DOA has sought FAA environmental approvals when projects were ripe for decision to proceed. **Table**

2-1 lists the H-JDP projects for which a NEPA document other than a categorical exclusion was prepared.

<b>Table 2-1</b>				
<b>Major H-JDP Program Component Environmental Processes</b>				
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Environmental Process</b>	<b>Date FONSI or ROD Issued</b>	<b>Actual Project Opening</b>	<b>Expected Project Opening</b>
Concourse E Expansion and Landside Access (East International Terminal)	EA	November 8, 2000		April 2012
9,000-foot Fifth Runway and Associated Projects	EIS	September 27, 2001	May 27, 2006	
CONRAC and Associated Projects	EA	July 7, 2003		November 1, 2009
South Complex Site Preparation and Associated Projects	EA	June 17, 2005	November 15, 2008	
Written Reevaluation of 9,000-foot Fifth Runway and Associated Projects	Written Reevaluation	March 31, 2006	May 27, 2006	

Source: City of Atlanta/Department of Aviation

The Runway 9L-27R extension is a component of the H-JDP and was disclosed in both the CONRAC EA and South Complex Site Prep EA cumulative impacts sections. The Runway 9L-27R extension is also shown on the Airport's current ALP as a future project.

The Runway 9L-27R extension has independent utility from Runway 10-28, the Maynard H. Jackson International Terminal (MHJIT), the CONRAC, and other H-JDP components. The Proposed Project would allow the DOA to provide facilities to better handle international aircraft passenger activity at Hartsfield-Jackson and provide better customer service as well as provide the airlines opportunities to reduce taxi-out delay through enhanced departure procedures.

## **2.7 Proposed Project Funding and Implementation Schedule**

The Proposed Project Construction Component implementation cost is estimated at approximately \$50 million. The Proposed Project Construction Component is anticipated to be funded through a combination of PFCs, AIP grants, and/or other Airport revenue sources. As with other projects on the Airport, no public (local or state) tax dollars would be used. The DOA desires to commence construction in the spring of 2010 and complete the Proposed Project by spring of 2011. It is anticipated, subject to FAA approval and procedure development, that the Modified Departure Procedures would be implemented by the end of 2009.