



# Extension of Runway 14-32 and Related Improvements at North Palm Beach County General Aviation Airport

In 2019, Palm Beach County initiated an Environmental Assessment for the proposed extension of Runway 14-32 from 4,300 to 6,000 feet at the North Palm Beach County General Aviation Airport (F45). In coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the analysis team, including aviation, engineering, and environmental professionals, is preparing a Draft Environmental Assessment, which will be made available for public review.

F45 opened in 1994 to accommodate general aviation aircraft activity. The airport serves as a reliever to Palm Beach International Airport (PBI) and was developed to accommodate existing and forecasted demand in Palm Beach County and Martin County.

Planning efforts to accommodate airport tenants and users have been ongoing since the airport opened. Continued growth in areas surrounding the airport have attracted more demanding general aviation aircraft to F45. These aircraft are operationally constrained at F45 due to the current runway length, requiring reductions in fuel, payload, and number of passengers in certain conditions. The FAA approved a Runway Length Justification Study for Runway 14/32 January 23, 2019, justifying an extension from 4,300 to 6,000 feet. The Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan incorporates the F45 Airport Master Plan, which includes analysis of airport expansion needs and future land use compatibility.

**General Aviation (GA)** is defined as all civil aviation operations except scheduled air service (commercial passenger service) and non-schedule air transport operations for hire. General aviation flights include recreation, flight instruction, business travel, agricultural application, emergency medical services, and other non-commercial flight activity.

In 2022, there were 309,608 FAA-certified active general aviation pilots and an additional 280,582 student pilots. General aviation operations accounted for 55 percent of total operations occurring in U.S. airspace in 2022. F45 supports approximately 100,000 annual operations and 183 based aircraft<sup>3</sup>

## Why does Palm Beach County need F45?

The 2022 Florida Department of Transportation Aviation Economic Impact Study determined F45 supports 467 jobs, \$22.4 million in payroll, and \$77.3 million in annual economic impact. F45 supports recreational flying, business activity, flight training, emergency medical flights, law enforcement, military operations, tourism, and agriculture production. The airport has also served as a staging area for hurricane relief efforts and local nonprofits have used the airport to transport rescued animals.

The Proposed Project includes extending Runway 14/32 1,700 feet to the northwest for a total length of 6,000 feet. The runway width will increase from 75 to 100 feet, and its centerline will shift 60 feet to the southwest to meet runway to taxiway separation standards. Related improvements include extending parallel Taxiway A, clearing and grading land, and relocating service roads, and constructing an Air Traffic Control Tower.

The proposed runway extension is designed to meet the needs of existing aircraft using F45. Due to demand in the area, annual operations forecasts are expected to increase approximately 2.2% five years after the project is completed. This activity level reflects approximately seven additional aircraft operations per day, or an average of 49 additional operations a week.

The airport is adjacent to the Sweetbay and Loxahatchee Slough Natural Areas, and these areas are a key focus of the study. The Environmental Assessment considers potential impacts to wetlands, protected species, and impacts from noise. The Proposed Project is the result of years of planning, including extensive alternative evaluations and coordination with outside entities to minimize environmental impacts while meeting airport needs. The analysis of potential impacts to adjacent resources, including the minimization and mitigation of potential impacts, will be fully detailed in the Environmental Assessment that will be published for your review and input.



## STAY CONNECTED!

After the Draft Environmental Assessment is released we will hold a public workshop and hearing to gather comments on the study and recommendations regarding the project. Find more information about the project and the public meeting date at:

<https://www.pbia.org/general-aviation/north-palm-beach-county-airport/>

- ▶ **2016 - 2019** Analysis of existing aircraft traffic and future demand at F45 - and potential alternatives to accommodate it.

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- ▶ **2020 - 2021** Conduct biological and engineering field surveys to evaluate existing conditions.

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- ▶ **2021** Continue to refine Proposed Project to minimize environmental impacts. Request early input from local and national resource agencies and other interested parties.

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- ▶ **2021 - 2023** Conduct environmental impacts analyses and special studies. Coordinate with FAA and agencies on the findings and analyses.

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- ▶ **2023 - 2024** Consolidate analyses and document findings in Draft EA.

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- ▶ **Spring - Summer 2024** Release Draft EA for public comment and hold public workshop and open 30-day public comment period on Draft EA.

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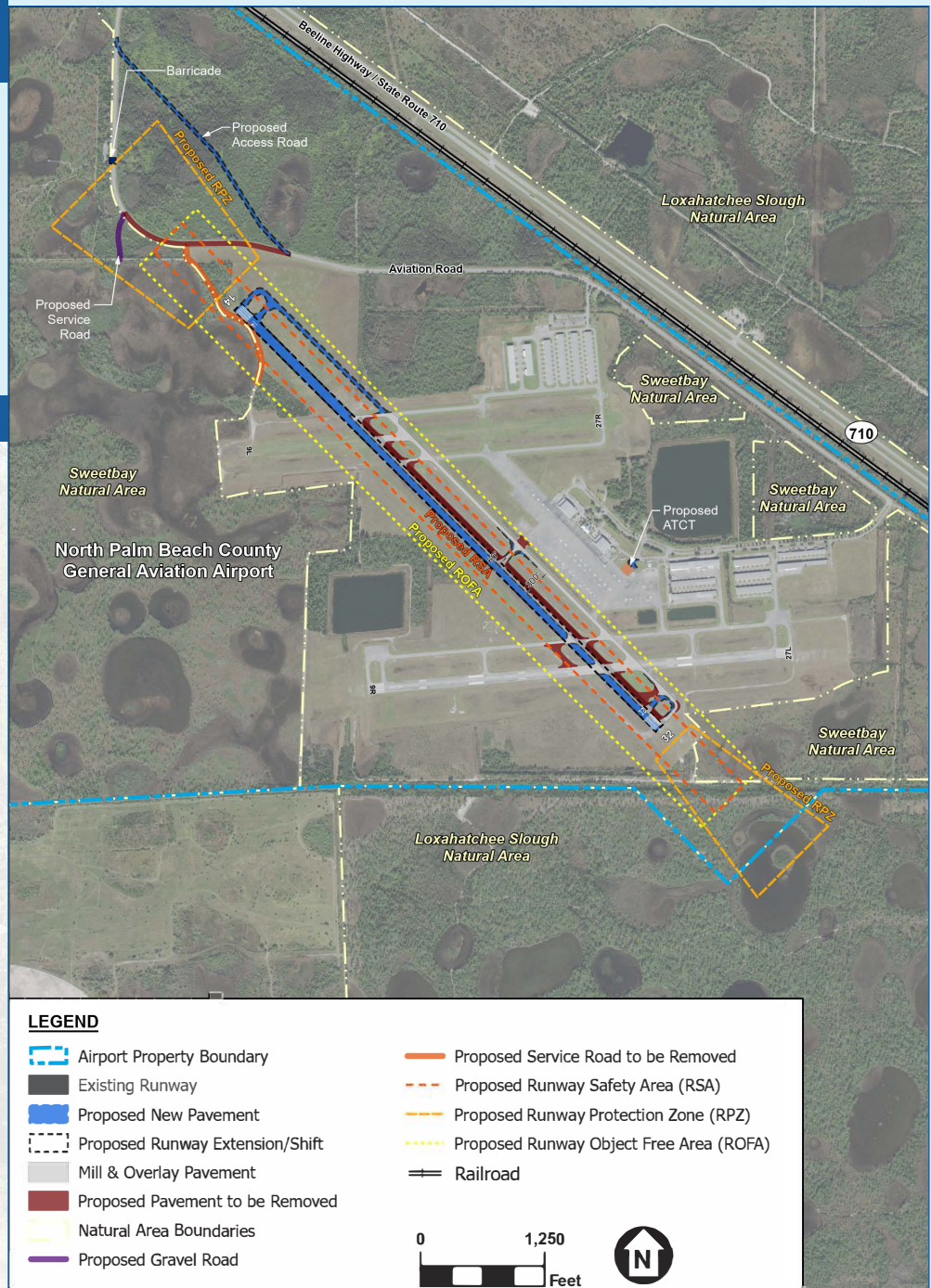
- ▶ **Summer 2024** Revise draft EA as necessary to address public comments.

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- ▶ **Fall 2024** FAA reviews Final EA and issues environmental determination.

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- ▶ **To Be Determined** If potential project impacts are determined to be not significant, begin project design and construction.



An Environmental Assessment (EA) is required under the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to determine whether a federal action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects, such as adverse impacts to air or water quality, biological resources, or human communities and economics.<sup>5</sup> The FAA has developed procedures for implementing NEPA that are specific to FAA's mission.<sup>6</sup> Based on the Final Environmental Assessment, the FAA will make a decision to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact or prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

## REFERENCES:

1. International Civil Aviation Organization, 2009. Working Paper: Civil Aviation Statistics – ICAO Review of the Classification and Definitions Used for Civil Aviation Activities
2. FAA, 2021. Aerospace Forecast, Fiscal Years 2021-2041.
3. FAA 2023 Terminal Area Forecast, issued January 2024
4. Florida Department of Transportation, 2022. The Economic Impact of F45.
5. EPA, 2024. NEPA Review Process. <https://www.epa.gov/nepa/national-environmental-policy-act-review-process>
6. FAA, 2023. Order 1050.1F - Policies and Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts [https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/apl/enviro\\_policy\\_guidance/policy/faa\\_nepa\\_order/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/enviro_policy_guidance/policy/faa_nepa_order/)