

The Barnstable Patriot

COUNTY

Barnstable Municipal Airport seeks input on Master Plan

Businesses, residents within 1-mi. radius to receive postcards

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Published 3:51 p.m. ET Nov. 10, 2020

Barnstable Municipal Airport (HYA) is developing a 20-year master plan to ensure that it continues to safely and efficiently meet the aviation needs of the National Airspace System and those of the surrounding community.

Preparing an airport master plan is required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to help plan for the future and highlight airport projects in need of future federal funding, including rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. Public input is an important part of this process.

The plan will not only consider the needs of aviation (the airfield, local general aviation, corporate aviation, and commercial aviation) over the next 20 years; it will also consider the needs of Cape Cod and the local region and economy.

In addition, the plan will make recommendations for promoting compatible land use around the airport and maximizing opportunities for non-aeronautical revenues to help support the airport's financial future.

Master Plan's overall goal

The goal of the Airport Master Plan is to provide the framework needed to guide future airport development that will cost-effectively satisfy aviation demand, while considering potential environmental and socioeconomic issues.

Developing the Airport Master Plan is an 18-24 month process; the same is true for the follow-on environmental process, 18-24 months.

"As of November 2020, we anticipate an additional 12-months remaining in the Airport Master Plan process," said Katie Service, airport manager. "We are now beginning to review Facility Needs and a Range of Alternatives."

A project stakeholder group comprised of over 40 representatives of airport tenants, users, Town of Barnstable officials, Town of Yarmouth officials, businesses, chambers of commerce, the Cape Cod Commission, and more will meet over the course of the project to provide feedback and insight for the airport and consulting team as the project is developed. The public will be involved at key points in the plan.

All-in-all, this is approximately a 36-month process. The Master Plan is the first part of the planning process; environmental review is the second part of the process, and finally implementation and development of the projects proposed.

Why is Barnstable Municipal Airport completing an Airport Master Plan?

The FAA recommends that public use airports such as Barnstable Municipal Airport prepare a new Airport Master Plan every 10 years +/- or as local aviation conditions change. The previous Master Plan was completed in the late '90s; therefore, the Airport has initiated this Master Plan to ensure the Airport continues to operate in a safe and efficient manner and to address any changes in the aviation industry both locally and nationally.

Following a qualifications-based selection process, McFarland Johnson, a national aviation consulting firm specializing in airport planning studies was selected as the general consultant for the airport.

The FAA provides 90% of the project funding, with the remaining 10 percent, 5% each, is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Aeronautics Division and Barnstable Municipal Airport.

The FAA funding is sourced from the Aviation Trust Fund, which is funded exclusively by various aviation user fees, including taxes on airline tickets, aviation fuel, and some aircraft parts. Barnstable Municipal Airport is one of nine Town of Barnstable Enterprise Funds, i.e., its budget is self-supporting through user-based charges.

The Town of Barnstable does not contribute monetarily in running the airport, and no General Fund monies are used for Airport operations.

As a publicly funded project at a publicly owned, public use airport, transparency and public engagement is of the utmost importance. To accomplish this, airport management, along with McFarland Johnson, the consultant hired to conduct the master plan has crafted a public engagement plan that includes outreach to not only airport stakeholders, but the general public as well. A project stakeholder group comprised of over 40 representatives of airport tenants, users, Town of Barnstable officials, businesses, chambers of commerce, the Cape Cod Commission, and more.

The group will meet four times over the course of the project to provide feedback and insight for the airport and consulting team as the project is developed.

The first of four meetings was held in person, with the second being conducted virtually. The remaining two meetings will be held in person if possible; otherwise, they will be held virtually as well.

Traditionally, airport master plans will hold public workshops in the form of an open house once or twice during the course of the project. These workshops act as forums for members of the general public to learn about the airport, the master plan, and proposed improvements and provide feedback in the form of comments to the project team.

With the ongoing COVID-19 precautions, and because the airport and project team anticipate a high degree of interest from the surrounding community and in the interest of public safety, the content for the first public workshop has been placed online.

The airport's YouTube channel (<http://bit.ly/HYAMasterplan>) now features presentations from previous project stakeholder meetings, divided by topic area into short, narrated videos for the public to watch and share. In addition, a dedicated e-mail address HYAMasterPlan@mjinc.com has been set up to receive any questions or comments that the public may have regarding the master plan for the airport.

Airport Master Plan documents can also be viewed and downloaded via the airport website, www.town.barnstable.ma.us/airport/.

Comments and questions received will be included in a response to comments and question/answer video that will be added to the channel.

Anyone requesting special accommodations to watch, listen or learn from the YouTube video content may contact the airport at 508-775-2020.

Public involvement

The public will be involved at key points in the plan. Public involvement as part of this project will begin this month and continue through the completion of the Master Plan and into the start and completion of the environmental process (anticipated environmental review completion in 2022).

In addition to placing public notices in the Cape Cod Times, the Airport has issued press releases that were picked up by many media outlets in a month-long communications protocol plan to get the word out about the plan and desire for community feedback.

To further enhance future communication on airport planning/development related matters, the project team has been assembling an email list from commenters to further enhance direct communication with interested parties.

Residents and businesses within a 1-mile radius will receive postcards requesting feedback, and social media posts and radio spots are also in the works.

No actions, or specific projects are approved as result of the master planning process; the public meetings reflect the plan itself, and not the physical projects.

The plan is still in progress, and the public is being asked to comment on the draft findings of the airport's future needs.

In the coming months, we will look at development alternatives, and there will be additional comment periods. There is currently no recommended plan for expansion at the airport; rather, only an identification of the needs.

Any expansion coming as result of this plan will need to undergo an environmental review process, which looks at both on airport and off airport impacts. This study will need to be conducted before any expansion will take place and can only begin after the master plan study is complete.

There is an extension to Runway 15-33 that is being analyzed as a future need, as are proposed modifications to the taxiway system.

Airport access points may also be modified, along with proposed hangar development, and proposed renewable energy development, such as additional solar or wind energy.

In the coming months, we will look at development alternatives, for which there will be additional comment periods for the public.

On an average daily basis, the forecast projects approximately 5 additional takeoffs per day, up from the current average of approximately 95, with the majority of additional operations being recreational and corporate aviation.

Overall operational levels are forecast to be well below the level of activity experienced at the airport during the 1990s and early 2000s, when BMA had over 200,000 annual operations (nearly 275 takeoffs per day).

Aircraft noise is not commensurate with aircraft size. In many cases, modern commercial jetliners are quieter and more environmentally friendly than many of the recreational and corporate aircraft flying at the airport today. The aircraft flying today are significantly quieter than the aircraft of the 1990s.

To date, the Airport and its tenants have implemented a number of projects or purchases that help reduce environmental impacts, help offset carbon emissions and help us do our part as environmental stewards and stakeholders within the community as we grow. See below. Similar actions will continue as the airport looks to implement projects in the future.

The FAA has two official roles during the Airport Master Plan study. The agency reviews and approves the aviation forecasts (the projected growth of airport services) that will be prepared as part of the master plan process; and the FAA formally approves the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for airspace and design standards.

In addition, the FAA has a supportive and advisory role during the preparation of the Airport Master Plan. The FAA may provide comments on Airport Master Plan findings, recommendations and deliverables, and may offer technical assistance and support.

The FAA does not formally approve the Airport Master Plan since it is considered a local policy or guidance document.

Yes. Approval by the FAA of the ALP means only that there are no safety concerns related to the proposed Airport Master Plan and that the depiction is in general conformance with FAA standards.

Additional studies may be necessary before a project depicted on the Master Plan is implemented. At a minimum, these usually include NEPA documentation and any other environmental studies needed to satisfy required permit applications.

Draft chapters and a project schedule are available online at: www.town.barnstable.ma.us/airport/MasterPlan.aspx

Or tune into the airport's YouTube channel – <http://bit.ly/HYAMasterplan> – to view presentations from previous project stakeholder meetings. They are divided by topic area and developed into short, narrated videos.

A dedicated e-mail address – HYAMasterPlan@mjinc.com – is set up to intercept questions and comments.

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