

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 12, 2020

Mr. Stephen Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Mr. Dickson,

We write to you on behalf of Yeager Airport (CRW) in Charleston, WV. Yeager Airport recently completed and submitted an update to its master plan as well as a study to analyze alternatives to the standard runway safety area. It is currently seeking approval and funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for this runway safety project, which we believe will dramatically improve safety at Yeager Airport.

Yeager Airport is currently required to have a runway safety area (RSA) that measures 500 feet wide and extends 1,000 feet off both ends of its runway. In order to provide this needed RSA, Yeager has proposed shifting Runway 5/23 to the east. The runway will also be extended slightly from 6,800 feet to 7,000 feet to adjust for gradient – the minimum length necessary to serve existing aircraft. This additional length will allow the existing fleet to serve passengers without restrictions and provide a flat area off Runway 23 that can be used for future apron expansion, allowing for future growth in military, general aviation, and cargo traffic.

We believe an Environmental Assessment (EA) would be appropriate for this project, as an environmental overview was already conducted as part of the planning process, all identified potential impacts can be mitigated, and virtually all potential impacts are on airport-owned property. We are aware that airport officials are already working to incorporate environmental mitigation into the project design to avoid and minimize environmental impacts. It is also important to note that this project is not a major runway extension that is being implemented to improve capacity, but rather for safety reasons and for existing aircraft. Perhaps most importantly, an EA will enable safety improvements to be made expeditiously, accelerating the overall design, procurement, and permitting process by 6 to 12 months.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) is in the process of conducting an EA for a new runway project, as virtually all of its impacts are on airport property, similar to the project at Yeager. Two other examples of projects that were assessed with an EA instead of an EIS include the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) Cargo Hub Development in March 2019 and the Kansas City International Airport Terminal Redevelopment project in February 2019.


The projects at these two airports had several environmental impacts – including biological resources, historic properties, noise, streams/wetlands, Section 4(f) resources, and hazardous materials – but all impacts were able to be mitigated so the projects' environmental impacts could be assessed with an EA.

The project is critical to ensuring the future success of Yeager Airport and the State of West Virginia. Runway safety areas are vital for the safety of all airports, but especially so at Yeager due to the sharp height of the drop off at the end of each runway. Extending the runway will drastically improve safety and permit air service to thrive, and construction will provide a significant economic benefit to the State. Given the importance of this project and the improvements to safety that will arise from its completion, we believe this project should be implemented in the most cost-effective and timely manner as possible. We kindly request that the FAA consider the implementation of an EA to ensure the expeditious completion of this project.


Sincerely,




Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



Carol Miller
Member of Congress



Alex Mooney
Member of Congress