

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
DAKOTA-MINNESOTA AIRPORTS DISTRICT OFFICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF AN AIRPORT-OWNED AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER AND
ENABLING PROJECTS
AT THE
DULUTH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
CITY OF DULUTH, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Construction of an Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) and Enabling Projects at the Duluth International Airport (DLH). The proposed action and potential environmental impacts are described in detail in the Environmental Assessment (EA) dated February 01, 2024, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference. The EA was prepared in accordance with the guidelines and requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality and the FAA to implement the environmental review and disclosure provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

Based on the evaluation in the EA, and mitigation commitments defined in the document, no significant impacts associated with the development actions were identified in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and FAA Order 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*. Therefore, it has been determined that an environmental impact statement was not needed and this FONSI was prepared. Further, no comments were received during the public comment period. This FONSI provides a summary of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Action, mitigation requirements, and the basis for the FAA's finding.

I. Project Description

The Duluth Airport Authority (DAA), as the sponsor of DLH, is proposing to replace an existing Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) with the construction of a new ATCT and Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) facility, at a site identified during an FAA Airway Facilities Tower Integration Laboratory (AFTIL) Study. The AFTIL Study is documented in the DLH ATCT AFTIL Siting Report that was approved by FAA's Air Traffic Organization (ATO) on August 14, 2023. **The DLH ATCT AFTIL Siting Report is attached to the EA as Appendix B.**

II. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to construct a new, Airport-owned, ATCT that meets FAA's minimum siting requirements. The need for the project is due to the existing ATCT being over 70 years old and past its useful life. The replacement ATCT will enable the installation of modern and required air traffic control equipment, provide an adequate and an enhanced work

environment, lower operating costs, and improve environmental performance. **EA Section 3 Project Purpose and Need.**

III. Alternatives Considered

The AFTIL Study evaluated numerous alternative locations for a new ATCT at DLH. The AFTIL Siting Report documents why sites were rejected and why the Proposed Action alternative best meets the project purpose and need. In addition, in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, the EA includes and evaluates reasonable alternatives for the ATCT project including a No Action Alternative, an On-Site Alternative, and the Proposed Action Alternative, as described in further detail in **EA Section 5 Alternatives**. The Proposed Action Alternative is described below:

Proposed Action Alternative - Construct ATCT at AFTIL Study Site A

ATCT Site A (Site 6 in the AFTIL Siting Report) was evaluated during the AFTIL study. This alternative evaluated constructing a control tower on the site of the existing Hermantown Hydraulics building, which is owned by the Duluth Airport Authority. During the airport's master planning process, this area was identified to be reserved for an aeronautical type of facility or airport support facility since this location did not provide convenient aircraft access to the airfield but was still closely situated to the Air Operations Area. This alternative will require the demolition of the Hermantown Hydraulics building. FAA evaluated this alternative during the AFTIL process and concurred that this site will meet the requirements of a new ATCT. This site was the top-rated site in the selection process.

As described in more detail in **Section 2 in the EA** the Proposed Action will include the following:

- Construction of a new ATCT involving construction of a tower structure at the location identified during the AFTIL study, an appropriately sized base building including offices, training rooms, and other support facilities for the ATCT and the continued operation of a TRACON facility, and a vehicle parking lot as required by the FAA. The cab floor of the new tower will be constructed to 119 feet above ground level (AGL), and the top of the tower will not exceed 153 feet AGL. The ATCT will also provide space for the FAA ATO Technical Operations team based at DLH
- Reconstruction and Realignment of Stebner Road
- Construction of a Temporary Access Road for the Civil Air Patrol Facility and Realignment of Parking
- Provide lot Access to "Jet Duluth" Hangar
- Demolition of Building 306 (DHL Building/Cold Storage)
- Demolition of Hermantown Hydraulics Building
- Vacating Platted Drainage and Utility Easements
- Removal of the existing ATCT
- FAA installation of electronic equipment
- An increase in the Minimum Descent Altitudes (MDA) on approaches to Runway 3

IV. Environmental Consequences

After careful analysis and consultation with various state and federal resource and regulatory agencies, it was determined that the Proposed Action satisfies the purpose and need for the project while causing no significant environmental impacts. As part of the AFTIL Study, a Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted at ATCT Site A (Site 6) and identified Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs). Based on Phase II ESA recommendations the DAA has agreed to remediate the new tower site to the satisfaction of the FAA and regulatory authorities, including the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). This FONSI includes an environmental commitment requiring remediation at the tower site to meet MPCA standards. In addition to the Phase II ESA, FAA ATO has requested that a second round of soil vapor testing be conducted to resolve inconsistencies from the previous round of testing. This will determine whether the FAA will require a vapor mitigation system to be added to the design of the ATCT, to ensure a safe operating environment for FAA personal. This testing is currently ongoing. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect environmental resources. ***Please refer to EA Section 6 Environmental Consequences.***

V. Community Planning Consistency Statement

The proposed action is consistent with community planning. The Duluth Airport Authority developed a Master Plan that will guide the Airport and community in meeting the aviation needs for the next 20 years. Further, the Public Involvement Plan, developed as part of the master planning process, included various tools to ensure that stakeholders participated and were informed throughout the process. Further information can be found at [Master Plan – Duluth International Airport \(duluthairport.com\)](#) or <https://duluthairport.com/master-plan/>.

VI. Commitments and Compliance

The Airport will implement the mitigation measure identified below, as described in further detail in ***EA Section 8 Mitigation***, as a condition of this environmental approval and FONSI:

Once ATCT design plans are complete the DAA will prepare a site-specific Response Action Plan (RAP) incorporating the results of contaminant testing at the new tower site. The RAP will be submitted to the MPCA for approval and to the FAA ATO for acceptance. RAP approval and acceptance is required before construction activities begin at the tower site. All mitigation measures required by the MPCA in the approved RAP will be implemented.

VII. Permits

The project will require the following permits:

- City of Duluth Commercial Wrecking Permit
- City of Duluth Grading Permit
- MPCA Demolition Notification
- MPCA NPDES/SDS Construction Stormwater General Permit

VIII. Public Review and Comment

To inform the public of the project and to gather comments, the Airport circulated the Notice of Availability of the EA on November 08, 2023. The comment period ended on December 08, 2023. No comments were received from the public during the comment period. ***Please refer to EA Appendix K Public Involvement Summary.***

This FONSI will be published in the Duluth News Tribune newspaper and the FONSI and Final EA for this project will be made available for review at the following locations for 30 days:

- Duluth Airport Authority - Administration office
- Duluth City Hall
- Hermantown City Hall
- Duluth Public Library
- Minnesota Department of Transportation – District 1

IX. Finding

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action, namely the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Action, is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and does not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102 (2) (C) of NEPA. As a result, the FAA will not prepare an environmental impact statement for this action.

APPROVED:

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