

**Comment 1** To summarize these detailed comments, FAA has: 1) accepted unsubstantiated forecasts and arguments about purpose and need, 2) inappropriately designed and evaluated runway alternatives, and 3) created and applied inappropriate and subjective criteria for evaluating various airspace configurations, 4) introduced new connected action by the Sponsor that requires preparation of a Supplemental EIS, specifically the encumbrance of the existing site in a sale and redevelopment that is an integral part and/or a connected action of the federal action, including allowing the Sponsor to advertise the site for sale on terms that allow the Sponsor to use the proceeds of the sale as collateral for debt to finance construction of the FAA's preferred alternative (a probable violation of FAA grant agreements already in force), and 5) failed to adequately disclose and analyze the comprehensive effects of the cumulative actions triggered by the federal action, specifically the "West Bay DSAP", the "RiverCamps at Crooked Creek", and the other intensive development of 75,000 acres encompassed in the "Sector Plan Overlay". This Sector Plan, only to be implemented if the FAA's preferred alternative is built, creates a predictable financial cost and environmental impact and/or mitigation, and thus the airport and Sector Plan are "part and parcel" of the broader federal action. These impacts and mitigations should be explained and quantified in a Programmatic EIS, a Supplemental EIS (or both).

**Response** Comments 1 through 5 above encompass a number of elements that are answered individually as part of specific responses to follow. To specifically respond to the Commentor's last point, secondary development of the areas surrounding the relocated airport, such as proposed under the Sector Plan, are not federal actions because the FAA has no federal approval authority or control over these actions. These are purely local decisions and do not require approvals or decisions by the FAA. Rather, such development is appropriately addressed as indirect or cumulative impacts. The FAA has treated secondary development surrounding the relocated airport as cumulative impacts, based on the best information available at the time of the FEIS. See Section 5.26 of the FEIS for the cumulative impacts analysis. FAA does not believe that any information was developed or is now available with respect to the Sector Plan and other proposed development in the area surrounding the relocation site that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS.

**Comment 2** The effect of these actions is to consider in the FEIS, several alternatives, including 8400 foot runways, that are not necessary to serve aviation demand in the service area during the planning period, and thus are not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" as required by NEPA. Even if the Sponsor's preferred alternative must be analyzed, FAA has not analyzed a "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" 8400 foot alternative on an upland greenfield site, instead constraining its analysis to arbitrarily selected unsuitable sites including 1) two other wetland-intensive sites and 2) the existing airport site that cannot be prudently or feasibly expanded beyond the 6800 foot runway that is FAA's own determination of the maximum airfield to meet any credible purpose and need during the planning period. In many instances, the analysis is arbitrarily and capriciously biased in favor of the Sponsor's Preferred Alternative. This course of conduct led FAA to extend undue deference to the Sponsor's preferred alternative, whereas an objective analysis would lead to selection of either 1) a 6800 foot alternative on the existing site (thus totally avoiding the devastating impacts at West Bay and arguably causing less impact than from the connected action of redeveloping the site) or 2) an 8400 foot alternative on an upland site that avoids most of the environmental impact and mitigation required at West Bay, or 3) separate facilities comprised of a new one-runway Part 139-certified airport on a minimum-footprint suitable site and retention of the present airport as a general aviation airport.

**Response**

The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. The FAA used a two-level screening process to determine if an alternative was feasible. The FAA screening criteria for the first level of alternatives analysis relates directly to the federal purpose and need for the proposed action as identified in Section 2.5 of the FEIS. To meet these criteria, an alternative must meet FAA safety and design standards, provide for compatibility with regional airspace and utilization, and provide for aviation demand for the defined market area. See Section 3.3.1.1 of the FEIS. The FAA Level 2 screening process was intended to further refine the evaluation of alternatives through the application of criteria specific to both natural and community environments affected by each alternative. The FAA Level 2 screening criteria were developed in response to federal and state agency input, preliminary review of environmental impacts, and FAA purpose and need as described in Section 2.5.1 of the FEIS. See Section 3.8 of the FEIS. The Runway 14-32 8,400-foot Southeast Alternative at the Existing Site met both the Level 1 and Level 2 screening criteria and was carried forward for full environmental evaluation in Chapter 5 of the FEIS. See Section 3.10 of the FEIS.

The FAA's actions and analysis were not arbitrary. The FAA conducted an independent analysis of appropriate locations for potential relocation sites. See Section 2.2 and 3.5 of the FEIS. The alternatives analysis was conducted to respond to the purpose and need identified in Section 2.5 of the FEIS. Ultimately, the alternatives that best met the purpose and need were carried forward for detailed analysis and disclosure of potential environmental impacts. Further, the FEIS presented the mitigation for impacts. The Commentor's statements that the FAA's FEIS is arbitrary and capricious is a conclusion of law, to which the FAA need not respond.

**Comment 3**

Furthermore the FEIS has been tainted by using the work product of consultants who have a financial interest in the project. These consultants have a clear conflict of interest as they both "justify" and "evaluate" the financial, technical, and environmental objectives of the Sponsor. Bechtel Infrastructure Inc., PBS&J, and their subconsultants are participating as "experts" in the "Ecosystem Team Permitting" (ETP) process (and the St. Joe Company is not, at least not in public) even though they are both contractors in related matters to both the airport Sponsor and The St. Joe Company. ETP is supposedly an arms-length negotiation of environmental mitigation, including concession of land or land entitlements, by St. Joe to benefit the Sponsor and the federal action that is the subject of this FEIS. These same consultants have consistently steered the project to the site offered as a "donation" by The St. Joe Company, provided that only a site at West Bay be selected. Such conflicting participation violates the principle and perhaps the letter of FAA's policy that prohibits consultants with a financial interest in the outcome to develop Environmental Impact Statements for FAA actions. The ETP process is integral to selection of a preferred alternative and the FAA Record of Decision, because the Sponsor's mitigation plan resulting from ETP is included in the FEIS and cited as a decisive factor in FAA's selection of FAA's preferred alternative. The FEIS is also tainted by authorizing the prime EIS consultant to do approximately \$1 Million worth of work (that at least in part should be the subject of a Supplemental EIS) without properly authorized funding or a written change order and subsequently misrepresenting this work as "to be done in the future" when in fact it was already substantially complete.

**Donald R. Hodges**  
**I004 Individual Letter**

**Response**

The FAA has conducted an independent assessment and evaluation of all data and analysis documented in the FEIS, including data and information prepared by the Airport Sponsor. The Airport Sponsor's consultants that participated in the ETP process are not the FAA's consultants. The timing of the Sponsor's procurement process is irrelevant to the FAA's objective analysis of the work products ultimately produced by the FAA's prime consultant. The FAA developed the schedule of the EIS independent of the Sponsor's local procurement process and the timing of that process. Therefore, the timing of the funding for the professional services rendered by the consultants had no impact on the timing and objectivity of the FAA's phased analysis of the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. FAA's prime consultant had no involvement in the actions during the ETP process of which the Commentor complains.

**Comment 4**

1. FAA has entered a contract to re-locate the VORTAC navaid from the existing airport to (presumably) the new airport, despite the fact that FAA should not participate in construction of a new airport before the NEPA process is finished.
2. FAA has provided a "draft" siting study for a new ATCT at the Sponsor's preferred site, and the Sponsor is proceeding with construction drawings based on this "draft" after being assured that the siting study will not be changed by the NEPA process.

Both of these actions are further evidence that the selection of FAA's preferred alternative and the forthcoming ROD are mere formalities and the FAA has not processed the EIS in good faith, instead acting arbitrarily and capriciously to favor (and indeed accelerate) the Sponsor's project despite FAA's own requirement to complete the NEPA process before approving an Airport Layout Plan and funding construction.

**Response**

The Commentor claims that FAA is contracting to relocate the VORTAC navaid to the new airport site before completing the NEPA process and issuing a Record of Decision; and that the FAA has issued a "draft" siting study for a new Air Traffic Control Tower and has assured the Sponsor that the draft will not be changed by the NEPA process. The Commentor is mistaken. The FAA has not taken any such actions. The Airport Sponsor has undertaken planning level studies for VORTAC replacement and an air traffic control tower as they relate to the operation of the proposed new airport. The FAA informed the Airport Sponsor that undertaking such studies in advance of the completion of the FAA's NEPA process was done at the Airport Sponsor's own risk. However, consideration of these navigational aids and air traffic control towers as it pertains to the proposal to relocate the airport in the NEPA process is fully appropriate. See response to Comment 1-3-2 in Letter F004 (Egginton) of Volume III of the FEIS.

Contrary to the Commentor's conclusions, the FAA's considerations of the VORTAC and air traffic control tower are routine for planning and NEPA purposes.

The FAA decision on the level of funding will not be determined until after the ROD is issued. The ROD is the decision on the EIS, and the FAA decision on funding is a separate process. However, the FAA has advised the sponsor that, at this time, the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway are eligible for AIP funding. This is consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and FAA's independent runway length analysis.

**Comment 5**

The NEPA process is one of the few opportunities for patient, objective, and long-term evaluation of such a significant project that will permanently alter environmental processes in place for thousands of years. FAA should strive for the utmost objectivity and attention to its legal responsibilities under NEPA. Due to the disclosure of significant additional scope of the federal action and connected actions, I request that a Supplemental DEIS or a Programmatic EIS (or both) including public hearing and comment, be prepared. I also request a copy of any Supplemental EIS, Programmatic EIS, and the FAA Record of Decision.

**Response**

The substance of this comment suggests that the proposed action (relocation of the airport) and redevelopment of the existing airport site and secondary development surrounding the relocated airport are connected actions within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.25(a)(1) that must be evaluated in a Supplemental EIS or Programmatic EIS.

Redevelopment of the existing airport site is not a federal action, nor does it require federal approval. Assuming that FAA's future decisions regarding transfer of the Airport Sponsor's federal grant obligations to the relocated airport, decommissioning of the Existing Site facilities and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use (referred to herein as "decommissioning and release") are actions connected to the proposed relocation of PFN, there are no direct environmental impacts associated with these actions. Nonetheless, the FAA recognizes that future FAA action regarding decommissioning and release may have indirect impacts, particularly related to redevelopment of the existing airport site. To address these potential indirect impacts, the FAA has evaluated the impacts associated with potential redevelopment of the existing site based on the best information available at this time. As disclosed in the FEIS at Section 5.1, these impacts were evaluated based on a composite redevelopment scenario based on the Request For Proposal (RFP) and accompanying Redevelopment Report issued by the Airport Sponsor. At this time, there is no approved plan for redevelopment. As explained in the FEIS, the three scenarios presented in the RFP and Redevelopment Report represent only three proposals of a potentially limitless number of redevelopment options, any of which might be approved. Even when a final redevelopment option is selected, that decision is outside of the purview and authority of the FAA. Furthermore, there is no legal requirement for the FAA to delay issuing a decision on the proposed relocation of the airport in anticipation of future FAA action that is not ripe for decision at this time (decommissioning and release). Similarly, there is no legal requirement for the FAA to delay action on the proposed relocation of the airport pending completion of local decisionmaking regarding the ultimate uses of the existing airport site when and if it is redeveloped. Once FAA's decisions regarding decommissioning and release are ripe for review and approval, and more definitive information is available regarding the redevelopment plan that will be presented to local authorities for approval, additional NEPA evaluation will be undertaken.

Regarding the secondary development of the areas surrounding the relocated airport, under the CEQ regulations this is not a connected action. Per the CEQ regulations, a connected action is a federal action that 1) automatically triggers other actions which may require environmental impact statements, 2) cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously, or 3) are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification. See 40 C.F.R. § 1508.25(a)(1). Under all three scenarios for identifying federally connected actions, each individual action being considered "connected" must be a federal action subject to NEPA review. For actions that are not under federal action or control, the description of "connected action" does not apply. Rather, such actions are properly considered under indirect or cumulative impact analyses.

**Donald R. Hodges**  
**I004 Individual Letter**

**Response**  
**Con't**

In this case, with respect to future development surrounding the relocated airport, the FAA has no authority or purview over such development. These are purely local decisions and do not require FAA action or approval. Thus, such development actions are not properly described as connected actions. Rather, development surrounding the relocated airport properly belongs, and has been included in, the FAA's analysis of indirect and cumulative impacts. The FAA has presented this analysis based on the best information available regarding future development surrounding the West Bay Site in Section 5.26 of the FEIS.

Regarding the Commentor's request that FAA prepare a Programmatic EIS, this EIS has been identified as a programmatic EIS for purposes of tiering future federal actions, as appropriate. The ROD will be available for public review at the Panama City-Bay County International Airport, Bay County Public Library, FAA Orlando Airports District Office, the FAA's website at [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov), and Panama City-Bay County International Airport's website at [www.pcairport.com](http://www.pcairport.com).

**Comment 6**

Hodges FEIS Comment: The Sponsor is proceeding (with the FAA's knowledge and apparent consent, (see FEIS Vol. II, Appendix "V") to offer the parcel for sale under terms that will allow the Sponsor to use the Purchaser's irrevocable Letter of Credit as collateral to finance the project. This is apparently a "sham transaction" to circumvent the Sponsor's grant obligations to FAA. If the FAA allows this connecting of the sale/redevelopment to the construction of the FAA's preferred alternative, it reinforces the necessity for a Supplemental EIS to address in detail the connected action. At very least, the FAA should act to recover its grant amounts from the Sponsor if the Sponsor proceeds with monetizing the existing site by any method.

**Response**

With respect to the comment regarding the Airport Sponsor's grant obligations, the Airport Sponsor has indicated its intent to close the existing airport site and sell the property for redevelopment in order to facilitate the construction and opening of the new airport. The Airport Sponsor has proposed obtaining a Letter of Credit from a prospective purchaser of the existing airport which would enable the Airport Sponsor to finance the improvements for the new airport. Once the new airport opens and the existing airport closes, the proceeds of the sale retire the debt which would be financed by the Letter of Credit. FAA does not consider this "a 'sham transaction' to circumvent the Sponsor's grant obligations to FAA," as alleged by the Commentor.

Grant Assurance 5 precludes an airport sponsor from selling, leasing, encumbering or otherwise transferring or disposing of any part of its title to airport property without the approval of the Secretary. Such approval will be required in the present case should the Airport Sponsor find a willing purchaser for the existing airport site after FAA issues its Record of Decision.

The sponsor is subject to the requirements of Grant Assurance 25 Airport Revenues and thus its use of the proceeds of the sale of the airport is restricted. The FAA's *Policy and Procedures Concerning the Use of Airport Revenue*, 64 Fed. Reg. 7696 (February 16, 1999) restates the general prohibition on the use of airport revenues for other than airport purposes.

Unlawful revenue diversion is the use of airport revenue for purposes other than the capital and operating costs of the airport, the local airport system, or other local facilities owned and operated by the airport owner or operator and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property.

**Donald R. Hodges**  
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**Response**                   The proposed use of the revenue from the sale of the existing airport site is  
**Con't**                         permissible under Grant Assurance 25 because the revenue would be used for airport  
                                      purposes.

**Comment 7**                 Hodges FEIS Comment: In this FEIS, FAA selects a preferred alternative that goes  
                                      far beyond any credible Federal purpose and need and does not minimize  
                                      environmental impacts to the extent possible. FAA's own analysis finds that a 6800  
                                      foot runway fulfills the FAA's criteria for the planning period. By introducing 8400  
                                      foot alternatives that are not feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable FAA has  
                                      isolated the Sponsor's preferred alternative as the only alternative that fulfill's both  
                                      FAA's and the Sponsor's preference. The 8400 foot alternatives used by FAA were  
                                      either on obviously inferior wetland sites or on the existing airport site that cannot  
                                      feasibly, reasonably, prudently, or practicably support an 8400 foot runway.  
                                      Specifically, the 8400 foot runway would require urban land acquisition, tunneling  
                                      for a 6-lane state highway under the runway, and displacement of hundreds of  
                                      houses/businesses. Although FAA blithely uses these devastating impacts to reject  
                                      the on-site alternative, it ignores the fact that these impacts are simply not plausible  
                                      as feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable under the ordinary meaning of these  
                                      terms. Although it is not even necessary to consider 8400 foot alternatives to fulfill  
                                      the federal purpose and need, if such alternatives are allowed they should be on sites  
                                      that are equivalent or superior to the Sponsor's alternative, such as upland greenfield  
                                      sites. Considering these new alternatives will require a Supplemental EIS.

**Response**                   The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that  
                                      include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted  
                                      an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the  
                                      FEIS. With respect to the consideration of an 8,400-foot alternative at the Existing  
                                      Site and the need for a Supplemental EIS, please see response to Comment 2. The  
                                      FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ  
                                      standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA's choice  
                                      among alternatives considered in the EIS. Even though FAA's analysis finds that a  
                                      6,800 foot runway is justified, the FAA has environmentally assessed the 8,400 foot  
                                      runway to respond to the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and to disclose the  
                                      range of environmental impacts that would occur if implemented.

**Comment 8**                 Hodges FEIS Comment: I adopt and incorporate by reference the comments of the  
                                      Natural Resources Defense Council regarding the obligations and actions of the  
                                      USACE.

**Response**                   Please see Responses to Comments to the National Resources Defense Council  
                                      located in Letters P001 and P003, Appendix B of this ROD.

**Comment 9**                 Hodges FEIS Comment: See comments on FEIS Vol. IV regarding the inferiority of  
                                      the preferred site to serve the air service market in this area.

**Response**                   Based on the FAA's experience, the FAA defined the primary commercial service  
                                      area for PFN in Section 1.6 of the FEIS. The preferred alternative is located within a  
                                      distance that is considered to be acceptable based on common industry practices  
                                      considering the defined market area and passenger length of travel times, including  
                                      within 20 miles of travel as stated in a NPIAS goal. See Section 2.5.2 of the FEIS.

**Donald R. Hodges**  
**I004 Individual Letter**

**Comment 10** Hodges FEIS Comment: The Sponsor's Updated Forecast is not credible for many reasons cited in my comments on the DEIS and my responses to FAA responses to those comments. Analyzing the aircraft operations inferred by this defective forecast acknowledges an aircraft type that can only be supported by the Sponsor's preferred alternative. FAA is trying to have it both ways: disavowing a forecast and then using it to posit operations that its own expert analysis cannot foresee. In the absence of these spurious operations, there is absolutely no reason to consider a runway longer than 6800 feet during the planning period.

**Response** The FAA has used both the FAA's TAF and the Airport Sponsor's forecast to analyze a full range of potential environmental impacts in the EIS. The FAA does not initiate airport development projects. The FAA may consider the Airport Sponsor's preferences in evaluating alternatives that would meet the needs for the National Airspace System and the FAA's environmental responsibilities.

**Comment 11** Hodges FEIS Comment: This need can be met by several of the 6800 foot alternatives at the existing site.

**Response** The FAA acknowledges that several of the alternatives found to meet the FAA's purpose and need are located at the Existing Airport Site. See Chapter 3 of the FEIS. The environmental consequences of these alternatives are documented throughout Chapter 5 of the EIS.

**Comment 12** Hodges FEIS Comment: Every airport would prefer to be unconstrained in any way, but this airport has not shown a need to expand to the extent it prefers. All of the valid needs can be met without the Sponsor's proposed project.

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 13** Hodges FEIS Comment: Nothing in this FEIS indicates a plausible "Projected Demand" during the FAA-sanctioned planning period that cannot be met by an on-site alternative. "Expansion Opportunities" that will require a 12,000 foot runway or a parallel runway are so far in the future as to be meaningless in this FEIS. FAA has only analyzed the proposed project; unless the "expansion opportunities" are actually proposed they are extraneous.

**Response** The FAA is responding to the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The Commentor is correct that the FAA has only analyzed in detail those alternatives for addressing development in the planning horizon, which was a ten-year horizon for purposes of the EIS. The Airport Sponsor has identified a need for an 8,400-foot runway sufficient to accommodate international charter operations during the planning horizon. The FAA has considered the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives in its NEPA evaluation. Furthermore, as referenced in Section 2.5.1, one of the NPIAS goals is "airports should be flexible and expandable, able to meet increased demand, and to accommodate new aircraft types". The FAA acknowledges there is no evidence at this time to support a need for further expansion beyond what was analyzed in the EIS for the current planning horizon. However, the FAA also recognizes that further expansion at the Existing Site beyond what was analyzed in this EIS would likely be infeasible. Thus, the constraints at the Existing Site when planning for the future are valid consideration for both the Airport Sponsor and the FAA.

**Comment 14** Hodges FEIS Comment: All of the parties to the Sector Plan are not disclosed above. The St. Joe Company joined Bay County in a contract to develop the Sector Plan, after St. Joe offered to donate land for an airport in a circumscribed area along CR 388 and West Bay. A circular argument was carried through a series of “facilitated” public meetings that did not allow any options that did not include an airport. The argument is this: “A new airport is coming – we must make a plan to accommodate it.” (Pause for collecting suggestions, except no suggestions without an airport.) (Reconvene meeting.) “We have devised a plan for the West Bay Sector – a new airport will be the keystone of the plan, and a preponderance of the other developments in the plan will not occur unless the airport is built.” In short, “The airport needs a plan” - “here is a plan that needs an airport.” The entire process has flowed from the offer by St. Joe, not from any objective aviation need. The same consultants who devised the sector plan for the Sponsor, St. Joe, and Bay County (and in various degrees the Feasibility Study, Site Selection Study, ETP, Draft ALP, existing-airport sale documents and various engineering documents) have now been allowed to participate in the mitigation plan for the FAA’s preferred alternative. These financial incentives have tainted the FEIS and all work product of these consultants should be deleted and re-done in a Supplemental EIS.

**Response** The FAA has objectively and independently evaluated any information provided by the Airport Sponsor and its consultants in preparation of the EIS in accordance with 40 CFR Section 1506.5(a). Furthermore, per CEQ regulations 40 CFR Section 1506.1(d) “This section does not preclude development by applicant of plans or designs or performance of other work necessary to support an application for Federal, State, or local permits of assistance”. The Sponsor’s preparation of Sector Plan documentation and the mitigation plan and the FAA’s consideration of that information is not only appropriate but contemplated under the CEQ regulations.

Further, the FAA does not believe that any information provided by the Commentor meets the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affects the FAA’s choice among alternatives considered in the EIS.

Regarding the Commentor’s concerns that the EIS was tainted by “financial incentives”, the FAA’s prime consultant for the preparation of the EIS did not participate in the Feasibility Study, Site Selection Study, ETP, Drafting of the ALP, existing-airport sale documents and various engineering documents referenced in the comment.

**Comment 15** Hodges FEIS Comment: It appears the FAA has identified no federal purpose for the project, and the FEIS in fact finds that the needs listed above can all be met without selecting the Sponsor’s environmentally devastating project and its connected action of redeveloping the existing site.

**Response** The federal purpose and need is included in Section 2.5 of the FEIS. As referenced in Section 2.5.1 of the FEIS, the FAA is charged with implementation of federal policies under its statutory authorities. It is within the framework of the Airport and Airways Improvement Act of 1982, 49 USC Section 47101-47131 (as amended), that the FAA is responding to the Airport Sponsor’s proposal to relocate the existing airport. The EIS acknowledges that alternatives at both the Existing Site and West Bay Site can meet FAA’s purpose and need. However, the degree to which the various alternatives are able to satisfy the purpose and need varies among the alternatives, as documented in Section 6.1.4 of the ROD.



**Donald R. Hodges**  
**I004 Individual Letter**

- Response Con't** This comment suggests that redevelopment of the Existing Site is a “connected action” to the proposal to relocate PFN. See Response to Comment 5 above regarding the relationship between relocation of the airport to the West Bay site and future FAA actions regarding decommissioning and release at the existing airport.
- Comment 16** Hodges FEIS Comment: I adopt and incorporate by reference the comments of the Natural Resources Defense Council regarding the obligations and actions of the USACE.
- Response** Please see Responses to Comments to the National Resources Defense Council located in Letters P001 and P003, Appendix B of this ROD.
- Comment 17** Hodges FEIS Comment: The screening criterion "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is invalid and arbitrary. This criterion was contrived by a consultant just for this EIS and does not exist in the FAA's own airspace/airport design methodology. FAA's "Airports District Office" did not even seek an official opinion from FAA's airspace experts, relying instead on Sponsor-solicited comments from a (since departed) local unit commander. The current local USAF commander (B/G Egginton) provided additional comments on the DEIS that are included in FEIS Vol. III "Response to Comments - Federal, State, and Local Agencies". These comments are considerably more objective and benign in their view of the alternatives. From Gen. Egginton's comment: "Fulfilling this mission requires either the maintenance of the current airspace configuration (SUAs, ATCAAs, and approach/departure corridors) or that the design of any new airport and its associated approach/departure corridors do not interfere with Tyndall's SUAs, ATCAAs, approaches and departures." These comments properly make no mention of the superiority of any potential configuration, and do not request addressing any "potential conflicts" - only that no alternative should reduce the operational space available to Tyndall and thus create actual constraints on Tyndall's mission. FAA is acting arbitrarily if it sets out to relieve "potential conflicts" rather than applying its own resources to the trivial problem of allocating airspace to three airports each 10 miles apart so that all reasonable and prudent alternatives can be evaluated.
- Response** The Commentor is incorrect in stating that the criterion was contrived by a consultant for just this EIS and does not exist in the FAA's own airspace/airport planning and design methodologies. Please refer to FAA Advisory Circular 150/5070-6B, *Airport Master Plans*, Appendix E, “Airport Site Selection”. The EIS is a federal document prepared by the FAA with input from various FAA program areas, including Air Traffic, and other appropriate federal agencies. Airspace issues are considered by the FAA for every project involving changes to an existing airfield or development of a new airfield.
- The FAA routinely coordinates with the DOD when there is military airspace in proximity to a proposed project. Military airspace issues have been appropriately considered throughout the planning process for this project, beginning with the feasibility analysis and site selection study, and continuing into the development of this EIS. The Level 1 screening criteria, which include more than just airspace criteria, are designed to eliminate alternatives that would not meet the objectives outlined in the purpose and need. See Section 3.3.1 of the FEIS. The “Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization” criterion addresses an element of the federal purpose and need to ensure that the airport meets the FAA design standards and is operated in a safe and efficient manner, as indicated in Section 2.5.2 of the FEIS. Specifically, the criterion is to ensure that any alternative would not increase the potential for airspace conflicts.

**Donald R. Hodges**  
**I004 Individual Letter**

**Response**  
**Con't**

The Commentor implies that the letters received from Brigadier General New and Brigadier General Egginton have inappropriately been considered differently in the EIS. General New's letter was provided prior to publication of the DEIS and provides input from the DOD regarding the need to "de-conflict" civil aircraft operations and Tyndall Air Force Base. Thus, this letter was able to be considered in the development and screening of alternatives. By contrast, General Egginton's comments were provided in response to the DEIS, after the proposed action and reasonable alternatives had been crafted, in part, to address the need to de-conflict operations as identified by General New. In FAA's opinion, General Egginton's comments were made with the benefit of these concerns having already been addressed by the alternatives put forth in the EIS, and support the need to ensure that any alternative that the FAA may select as its preferred alternative does not in any way further complicate the complexity of the airspace or hinder the ability of Tyndall AFB to further its mission. It is not the purview of the DOD to identify a preferred alternative for this FEIS. Appropriately, General Egginton's letter does not identify a preferred alternative. The purpose of the "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" criterion is to ensure that any alternative would not increase the potential for airspace conflicts.

**Comment 18**

If one accepts that the Level 1 screen "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is valid (and I do not for reasons given above), FAA's application of this screen is contradictory and arbitrary. (See Table S-1, "Summary of Alternatives Evaluation - Level 1 - Purpose and Need"). The "No-Action" alternative passes this screen for the obvious reason that it cannot be rationalized away like the "Separate Facilities" alternative, even though all future operations would operate in this supposedly unacceptable "potential conflict" environment, and in fact all likely future operations in the planning period have already been surpassed in the past by the "No-Action" alternative. The "Separate Facilities" alternative is found to fail this screen, even though all future operations would be split between three airspace-standards-compliant airports within approximately 20 miles instead of two airspace-compliant airports within 10 miles, with the supposedly more benign general aviation operations biased toward the airport needing the most relief from alleged "potential conflicts".

**Response**

Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization is only one of three factors used in Level 1 Screening, the other two address meeting FAA safety and design criteria and providing for aviation demand. The FAA acknowledges that the No-Action Alternative does not meet the Level 1 evaluation, but is required by NEPA's implementing regulations published by CEQ to be carried forward for detailed analysis. See Section 3.7 of the FEIS. This does not mean that another alternative that does not meet the Level 1 evaluation should be carried forward. The reasons for the failure of the "Separate Facilities" alternative are discussed in Section 3.4.5 of the FEIS. The FAA disagrees with the opinion of the Commenter, for the reasons included in Section 3.4.5 of the FEIS.

**Comment 19**

The "separate facilities" alternative was arbitrarily screened out despite the fact that it would preclude all of the impacts from redevelopment, and allow the new airport's "footprint" and impacts to be reduced. This action defies the logic that other Sponsors and FAA have followed so successfully: use an existing airport as long as it is viable, then build an additional airport to expand air carrier operations, but do not destroy a unique general aviation asset just for a marginal improvement. This approach is also the lowest-cost and lowest-impact alternative that meets both the Sponsor's and the federal purpose and need.

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**Response** The Commentor is incorrect in his statement that the Separate Facilities alternative was arbitrarily screened out. The Separate Facilities was eliminated as a result of the Level 1 airspace screening criterion. The Airport Sponsor did not propose to keep the existing airport open after the relocated airport is built. This is not the “destruction” of an airport; it is the replacement of the airport with a new airport that would meet FAA standards and the Sponsor’s objectives. Replacement airports such as that proposed for Panama City have also been constructed when constraints at an existing site prevented further expansion to accommodate aviation needs.

**Comment 20** The Sponsor contends that the proceeds from selling PFN are essential to the project, yet the Florida legislature and FAA have already increased their appropriation plans by more than the expected proceeds. (FAA’s “share” has gone from \$70 Million to over \$100 Million, and FDOT’s “share” has gone from \$70 Million to over \$130 Million). Patrons who can raise their support by \$90 Million for the same project should have no problem finding the \$55 Million to offset expected sale proceeds.

**Response** The FAA has not committed to providing any specific level of funding for the proposed project. The FAA decision on the level of funding will not be determined until after the ROD is issued. The ROD is the decision on the EIS, and the FAA decision on funding is a separate process. However, the FAA has advised the sponsor that, at this time, the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway are eligible for AIP funding. This is consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and FAA’s independent runway length analysis. The FAA is not in a position to comment on the State of Florida’s participation in funding of the project.

**Comment 21** Hodges FEIS Comment: The existing site 8400 foot alternative is not feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable under the ordinary meaning of these terms. If an 8400 foot alternative other than the Sponsor’s is to be considered, it should either be on a third and less vulnerable site or be a reduced-scope project as part of separate facilities for airlines (and voluntary relocated GA) and general aviation. I request a Supplemental EIS to introduce and analyze such an alternative.

**Response** The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. The FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA’s choice among alternatives considered in the EIS.

**Comment 22** Hodges FEIS Comment: The FAA has not presented reasons throughout this FEIS that support the selection of the Sponsor’s proposed project as the FAA’s preferred alternative. FAA has allowed one improper alternative to influence the analysis, and has excluded one or more superior alternatives that should be analyzed. I request that the alternatives be revised and a Supplemental EIS be conducted.

**Response** Please see Response to Comment 21 above.

**Comment 23** A Supplemental EIS is also required to fully assess the connected action of redeveloping the existing airport site if the FAA’s preferred alternative is built. The Sponsor and FAA have inextricably connected redevelopment to the Sponsor’s project by undertaking to monetize the existing site prior to building and opening a replacement.

**Response** See the response to Comment 5 above.

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**Comment 24** A Programmatic EIS is required to fully assess the cumulative actions triggered by this federal action over the broad area of the Optional Sector Plan. This sector plan was developed in a process that did not allow the plan without an embedded airport, therefore the airport and the Sector Plan are part and parcel and require a Programmatic EIS. (End of Hodges comments on FEIS Executive Summary)

**Response** The EIS prepared for the relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport will serve as a programmatic EIS as appropriate for purposes of tiering for further actions subject to NEPA review (*i.e.*, decommissioning and release of the existing site, subsequent development on the relocated airport site) consistent with CEQ regulation 40 CFR Section 1502.20. The FAA has no authority or purview over future land development surrounding the relocated airport. These are purely local decisions and do not implicate FAA approvals or decisions. Rather, such development is appropriately addressed as indirect or cumulative impacts. The FAA has done so using the best available information at the time in Section 5.26 of the FEIS.

**Comment 25** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-1): Filling Goose Bayou was ruled out in 1998 by overwhelming negative response from both agencies and the public, and the documentation for this ruling was readily available to FAA before the 10/2003 and 2/2004 letters from FDEP. This single factor has been cited as the primary reason that the Sponsor undertook “relocation”, which led to the proposed project. The EMAS alternatives still do not take advantage of design features that would minimize intrusion into the community, such as offset localizer and full use of the land existing westward of the runway (approx 120 feet rather than 59 feet), but at least FAA has contradicted the Sponsor's assertion that EMAS is not applicable at PFN.

**Response** The primary reasons the Airport Sponsor considered relocation were to meet FAA safety and design standards, operate and grow airport services without physical constraints, prepare for future opportunities for accommodating projected demand and expansion opportunities, and develop for consistency with local planning objectives. The impacts to Goose Bayou were a consideration of the Airport Sponsor and of the FAA. However, those impacts were considered in Level 2 analysis as they are not related to purpose and need for the project.

The EMAS alternatives were developed in response to the Commentor's inputs on the DEIS and in conjunction with FAA design criteria. The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include several alternatives involving the installation of EMAS, consistent with FAA design criteria, and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

**Comment 26** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-2): By lending credibility to the Sponsor's flawed forecast for any purpose, FAA has erred by developing 8400-foot on-site alternatives that are not “feasible”, “reasonable” or “prudent”, but nevertheless weigh heavily against the existing site in tradeoff analysis. For the purpose of this EIS, FAA should limit all alternatives to its own determination of 6800 feet of primary runway. What would FAA do if the Sponsor proposed 13,500 feet? Any length over 6800 feet cannot pass FAA's own expert screening for justification of federal funding and thus the “federal action”. The Sponsor has presented several desires, but no credible purpose or need.

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**Response** The FAA acknowledges that its assessment of runway length requirements indicated an initial need for a 6,800-foot runway, although the Airport Sponsor has indicated a need for an initial length of 8,400 feet. FAA also recognizes the benefit of maintaining flexibility to further expand facilities for potential future needs and has considered the potential need for and ability to expand in its evaluation of alternatives. The Airport Sponsor has not requested that the FAA consider a 13,500-foot runway, and the FAA need not consider such a request. Regarding the comment on FAA's funding process, see response to comment 20 above.

**Comment 27** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-3): By proposing alternatives that cannot possibly be built, FAA has not developed only "Feasible", "reasonable", or "prudent" alternatives. The EIS should be confined to alternatives that can be realized, not merely designed to FAA criteria.

**Response** The FAA does not propose airport alternatives, but develops alternatives in response to an Airport Sponsor's proposed project. Aviation development projects must be designed to meet FAA safety and design standards. The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. The FAA disagrees with the Commentor's statement that the FEIS analyzed alternatives that "cannot possibly be built" or that are not feasible, reasonable or prudent alternatives. Rather, if an alternative is incapable of being built, FAA would not carry it forward for detailed consideration in the EIS.

**Comment 28** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-4): For such a crucial decision as decommissioning an airport from the national aviation system, the criteria should be documented and generally applicable. In this case, FAA has extrapolated from one local base commander's comments a whole new rule: "Compatibility with airspace configuration and utilization". This new rule has no dimensional, procedural, traffic-based, or separation-based criteria that define pass/fail! Then, FAA has mis-applied the new rule in its "Level One" screening by finding that the "No-Action" alternative PASSES Level One screening for this rule and the "Separate Facilities" alternative FAILS even though the "No-Action" alternative would concentrate all future traffic in closer proximity to Tyndall AFB and its SUA's, whereas the "Separate Facilities" alternative would disperse traffic over a larger area. This new rule apparently only applies to Bay County, since FAA (using the same consultant) found no "compatibility" problem with allowing 240+ operations per hour at ATL on 5 runways within 2 miles embedded in a region with several civil and military airports in close proximity. This distortion of trivial airspace management issues is an arbitrary and capricious decision that eliminates the most logical and economical solution to the Sponsor's perceived purpose and need. Instead of twisting the facts this way, FAA should be encouraging a solution that expands the national aviation system and minimizes environmental impact at both the existing and the remote site. We see the existing site becoming an ordinary and intensive mixed-use development instead of a unique aviation asset that is relatively benign in environmental impact, while the remote site has twice as much impact (and consequent mitigation) as necessary.

**Response** The Commentor is incorrect in stating that the airspace criterion is a new rule developed just for this EIS or that it was developed on the basis of comments from one local base commander. Airspace issues are considered by the FAA for every project involving changes to an existing airfield or development of a new airfield. Please refer to FAA Advisory Circular 150/5070-6B, *Airport Master Plans*, Appendix E, "Airport Site Selection".

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**Response  
Con't** The FAA acknowledges that the No-Action Alternative does not meet the Level 1 evaluation, but is required by NEPA's implementing regulations published by CEQ to be carried forward for detailed analysis. See Section 3.7 of the FEIS. This does not mean that another alternative that does not meet the Level 1 evaluation should be carried forward. See Section 3.3.1 of the FEIS.

Comparisons of operations or procedures at particular airports or within particular airspace environments as the Commentor has attempted to do, are often meaningless, because of the varying conditions at the specific locations. The number of operations at any given airport or how the airspace is operated at other airports is not relevant to the comparison of alternatives in this EIS. The purpose of the "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" criterion is to ensure that any alternative would not increase the potential for airspace conflicts as a result of the Airport Sponsor's proposed project.

The FAA recognizes that complex airspace exists in other areas, however, it is the goal of the FAA to undertake projects in a manner that does not further contribute to airspace complexity when such opportunities exist.

**Comment 29** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-5): From the Executive Summary: "From an environmental standpoint, neither the Existing Site nor the West Bay Site can be deemed clearly superior." This statement alone distills the bias FAA has demonstrated. By essentially ignoring the vast impact of the West Bay alternative while turning a blind eye to the actual impact of decommissioning PFN and building a whole new urban center on the site, FAA loses its claim to objectivity. If the airport could actually be "relocated", the preferred alternative might have merit; in fact, the airport is destroyed, a whole new development follows as a direct consequence, and a new airport is built on an environmentally disastrous site, all for the vast benefits of 2100 additional feet of runway. What a waste after \$6 Million and four years of "analysis".

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 30** Hodges FEIS Response (2-1-6): The purpose of this comment is to address FAA's insistence that FAA does not propose airport projects, it just reacts to requests. In fact, such requests would be vastly reduced if the "Sponsors" were not heavily subsidized and encouraged to propose ever-larger facilities with little regard to justification. This Sponsor could not even afford to design the project without FAA and FDOT – it is disingenuous to say that the Sponsor is an independent entity in this undertaking.

**Response** The FAA often does grant a sizable share of a project's cost to airport sponsors through the AIP. Many airports would be unable to afford airport improvement projects without financial support from the FAA. This is not unusual. However, this does not change the fact that planning for a sponsor's airport is solely the sponsor's responsibility and the FAA does not initiate airport improvement projects.

**Comment 31** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-7): We are splitting hairs here – the FAA made several penetrating comments that go to the heart of justifying this project, and the Sponsor now admits the comments were discussed verbally but no record of disposition was made. So now we are six years and \$36 Million later, the questions are more relevant than ever, and no answers are in the record. Who is accountable?

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- Response** This comment consists of statements of opinion and factual assertions that FAA is unable to verify. As a result, the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 32** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-8): RSA determinations are not a local issue. Why is it outside the purview of FAA when a Sponsor propagates information directly contradictory to FAA policy after being told in writing how to handle RSA assumptions for the project?
- Response** The Commentor is correct that RSA determinations are not a local issue. The remainder of this comment references a previous comment regarding media campaigns supporting the airport relocation, and this issue is outside the purview of the FAA and is irrelevant to the EIS.
- Comment 33** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-9): So the standard now is “It only has to be legal.” This is a low bar for administering multimillion-dollar expenditures. As for EIS preparation, it appears that FAA has allowed the consultant to work for months on additional tasks without funding or a change order, in order to expedite the EIS.
- Response** The comment above largely consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response. Regarding the Airport Sponsor’s approval of funding for the consultant’s work, the timing of the Sponsor’s procurement process is irrelevant to the FAA’s objective analysis of the work products ultimately produced by the FAA’s prime consultant. The FAA developed the schedule of the EIS independent of the Sponsor’s local procurement process and the timing of that process. Therefore, the timing of the funding for the professional services rendered by the consultants had no impact on the timing and objectivity of the FAA’s analysis of the Airport Sponsor’s proposed project.
- Comment 34** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-10 and 5-5-11): The Sponsor’s mitigation plan that is vital to the EIS was developed by the ETP process. The same prime consultant has billed almost \$30 Million to the Sponsor and presently estimates \$30 Million more if the project is approved. FAA would have been better served to require total independence from this consultant for all work affecting the Record of Decision. Has FAA concurred in writing with the open-ended engagement?
- Response** The FAA responds to funding requests from airport sponsors on an individual basis. The FAA does not provide open-ended funding. The FAA provides funding through the Airport Improvement Program, for which Airport Sponsors go through a defined application process to be considered for federal funds. The consultant who participated in preparation of the mitigation plan is not the FAA’s federally approved consultant for preparation of the FEIS. The FAA in cooperation with the USACE has also independently reviewed the mitigation plan.
- Comment 35** Hodges FEIS Response (4-20-12 and 5-5-13): These comments go beyond the narrow mitigation plan for the direct federal action. The West Bay DSAP (and subsequent DSAPs authorized by the Sector Plan) are cumulative impacts that should be fully addressed in a Supplemental or Programmatic EIS, since they were not included in this EIS. This induced growth is embodied in the Sponsor’s purpose and need. Detailed land uses and population/employment have been projected for the West Bay DSAP and the RiverCamp development, and such projections can be extrapolated for the entire 75,000-acre Sector Plan. Again, there is no assurance that preservation or mitigation will be adequate unless the impacts are fully understood. I once again request a Supplemental EIS to address both the impact of the greater Sector Plan area and the intensive redevelopment of the existing site.

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**Response** The West Bay DSAP was included in the cumulative impacts analysis in Section 5.26 of the FEIS, as required by NEPA. The West Bay DSAP is a land use plan developed by local land use authorities, and is completely outside of the FAA's purview and authority. See response to Comment 5 above regarding development surrounding the relocated airport site. Because FAA has no future federal action related to development proposed under the West Bay DSAP, this is not a federal action requiring analysis in a Programmatic EIS. Additionally, the development proposed in the West Bay DSAP is not new information meeting the standards for preparation of a Supplemental EIS, as it was fully considered in the cumulative impacts section of both FAA's Draft and Final EIS. The USACE is currently reviewing the permit application package, including proposed mitigation, for the airport. Regarding the comment that a Supplemental EIS should be prepared regarding the redevelopment of the Existing Site, see response to Comment 5 above.

**Comment 36** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-14): The TAF continues to over-estimate PFN traffic, although not as egregiously as the Sponsor's forecasts. Neither forecast supports a need for a new airport because simple restoration of previous airline flight activity using 50- to 90-seat regional aircraft will fulfill the TAF through at least 2030.

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response. Section 3.4.1 of the FEIS documents that the existing airport is not sufficient to meet aviation demand in the service area or FAA safety and design standards.

**Comment 37** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-16): Until the 2-airport alternative is actually designed (including procedures) it is not clear that any configuration is superior in objective terms. General New's letter has been given far more consideration than the official comments on the DEIS of General Egginton. Gen. Egginton is neutral about the decision on a new airport, as long as the Tyndall SUA's and nav aids are maintained. None of the alternatives impinge on SUA's and nobody has defined what a "potential conflict" is. When General New is asked to make an observation, his vague concern is used to reconfigure the entire regional airspace. This is all to accommodate restoring flight activity to previous levels, since growth is still well below historical levels for both military and civil traffic. This is a classic "tempest in a teapot".

**Response** With respect to the first sentence of this comment, the FAA has completed the appropriate level of airspace review for decisionmaking through the planning process and for this EIS. It is possible to obtain enough information to determine that one configuration or alternative would have a greater potential for airspace conflicts than another without conducting a formal airspace review. For projects such as this one, FAA does not complete formal flight procedures until after the environmental approval process. The criterion to limit complexity of airspace is one of many decisionmaking factors. The FAA recognizes that complex airspace exists in other areas, however, it is the goal of the FAA to undertake projects in a manner that does not further contribute to airspace complexity when such opportunities exist. With respect to the comment that the letters received from Brigadier General New and Brigadier General Egginton have inappropriately been considered differently in the EIS, see response to Comment 17 above.

A "potential for conflict" would exist when aircraft encroaches on airspace not designated for its use. Such potential conflict increases as the number of aviation facilities in close proximity to special use airspace.

The last three sentences of the comment consist of statements of opinion, to which the FAA cannot meaningfully respond.



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- Comment 38** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-18): The Sponsor's project is a 2100-foot runway extension and a land rush for developers at a public cost of at least \$400 Million, plus marking up the price of all the user facilities.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 39** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-19): We will never know if the project could have been built with grant funds – the Sponsor has squandered so much money accelerating this ill-advised project and complicating it with creative financing that it may not be possible at all. A conventional “pay as you go” approach could have delivered something useful long before it will be needed.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 40** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-20): Let us consider the 2003 TAF (Vol. I, p. 1-14) – the forecast predicts 263,406 enplanements in 2018. If the service is entirely on 60-seat regional jets with 75% load factor, ONLY 16 DEPARTURES PER DAY ARE REQUIRED. If the TAF is the “valid forecast” then this EIS should conclude there is no “purpose and need” for a new airport. Indeed, if we allow the Sponsor's forecast except for the charter fiction, we have 393,000 enplaned – 24 DEPARTURES (OR LESS IF A FEW MAINLINE DEPARTURES ARE INCLUDED). This barely matches previous flight activity and does not require mainline service up to 24 departures per day. Still no “purpose and need”!
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion and the Commentor’s interpretation of TAF data, to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 41** Hodges FEIS Response (2-1-21): The development of an airport is much more concerned with flight activity than with passenger traffic, especially when passenger traffic is so low as to fit in 12 to 20 departures of regional and narrow-body aircraft for decades to come. The Sponsor claims no capacity benefits because it is simply impossible to stretch the facts to include a capacity need. It would be great if the forecasts could agree, but even the Sponsor's optimistic forecast fits well under this scenario, until it enters the fiction of daily widebody charters. The benefits are simply not worth either the financial or the environmental costs.
- Response** The conclusion reached by the Commentor in the comment above consists of statements of opinion to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 42** Hodges FEIS Response (2-1-22): The 8400-foot runway on the existing site is not the Sponsor's project, but allowing it into the analysis distorts the tradeoff favoring an unnecessary 8400-foot runway. The only “reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practical” 8400-foot alternatives would be at sites away from both West Bay (or other wetland-intensive sites) and the existing site. FAA has not proposed any valid 8400-foot alternatives to West Bay.
- Response** The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. Please see response to Comment 27 above.

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- Comment 43** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-27): The Sponsor's airport, wherever it is, will never capture much traffic from adjacent market areas.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response. See Section 1.6 of the FEIS for analysis of the primary market for the airport.
- Comment 44** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-28): Redundant response noted.
- Response** The FAA acknowledges the comment.
- Comment 45** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-30): The Sponsor has not identified a purpose or need with this jargon – it has no meaning.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response. However, the FAA's purpose and need was developed independently of the purpose and need identified by the Airport Sponsor as documented in Section 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 of the FEIS. The Level 1 evaluation of alternatives in the EIS was conducted using criteria developed in accordance with the FAA's purpose and need.
- Comment 46** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-31): Another "purpose and need" which is neither. Both sites are compatible, largely because the airport is so under-utilized.
- Response** See Response to Comment 45 above.
- Comment 47** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-32): Non-response noted.
- Response** The Commentor expresses dissatisfaction with FAA responses that consisted of "Comment noted". This response was provided in those instances where the Commentor expressed personal opinion or otherwise offered information to which the FAA could not provide a substantive response. The FAA's response of "Comment noted" indicates that the FAA has read and considered the comment.
- Comment 48** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-33): Another spurious need, not supported, just "identified".
- Response** See Response to Comment 45 above.
- Comment 49** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-34): The Sponsor now proposes to fill this need by assisting a developer to dredge Goose Bayou – and FAA does not see this as a part of the project even though the project cannot happen without it.
- Response** Please see response to Comment 5 above regarding the relationship between relocation of the airport to the West Bay site and future FAA actions regarding decommissioning and release at the existing airport. The FAA acknowledges that there will likely be future development at the existing airport site; however, the precise form of that redevelopment is yet unknown, therefore impacts to Goose Bayou are unknown. The redevelopment of the airport would be subject to the same regulatory requirements as the airport itself. See Section 5.1 of the FEIS. Secondary and cumulative impacts from future federal actions associated with decommissioning and release of the existing site were disclosed to the extent practicable based on the best available information. See Section 5.26 of the FEIS. Such impacts include impacts associated with redevelopment of the existing site.

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**Comment 50** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-35): Redundant response noted. The proposed project is based on "... Future Opportunities for Accommodating Projected DEMAND" - is not "accommodating demand" another way of saying "increasing capacity"? I agree that there is no need to increase capacity, but the Sponsor insists on considering events so far in the future that they are meaningless.

**Response** Accommodating demand can mean a number of things, but does not necessarily mean additional capacity in terms of the number of operations that can be accommodated. At PFN, the reference to accommodating demand refers to providing facilities to handle larger aircraft that may operate at the facility in the future and to provide for further long-term expansion capability. Proposed development beyond the initial phase as described in Section 2.2.3 of the FEIS was included in the FEIS for disclosure and informational purposes only. At such time that further development is ripe for consideration, further NEPA analysis will be conducted.

**Comment 51** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-40): Redundant.

**Response** It is not clear what the Commentor means by "redundant" and the FAA is not able to make a meaningful response. The FAA believes that the response in the FEIS adequately addresses the Commentor's comment on the DEIS.

**Comment 52** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-40): There is plentiful documentation pre-dating the DEIS that Goose Bayou should not be filled. This rule should be applied to redevelopment as strenuously as it has been for airport expansion. Strangely, when the Sponsor's audience is developer/purchasers, the rules are different from those in use by FAA and FDOT for airport expansion.

**Response** FAA does not disagree that the impacts that would be associated with development of a marina at the Existing Airport Site could be extensive. However, FAA has no control over what potential future development proposals may be offered and accepted by local approving authorities. It is conjecture at this time to try to predict both what the development might ultimately be and whether agencies with jurisdiction and approval authority would approve or grant necessary permits for such development. See response to comment 5 above.

**Comment 53** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-41): Please then answer why the FAA is involved in approving a "Land Donation Agreement" that involves real estate considerations beyond aviation needs, and a "Request for Proposals" that allows the Sponsor to collateralize the purchase proceeds of the existing airport before it is decommissioned? Both of these transactions are quite irregular.

**Response** FAA did not approve the Land Donation Agreement, but rather reviewed it to confirm that the terms the Airport Sponsor was agreeing to were consistent with the Sponsor's grant assurance obligations and did not violate any compliance obligations, including Grant Assurance 4 Good Title. This process is consistent with FAA Order 5190.6A, *Airport Compliance Requirements*. The FAA reviewed the LDA but is not involved in the "approval" of the agreement. In addition, the FAA is relying upon the donated land described in the LDA to provide mitigation for project impacts and therefore the adequacy of the agreement is of interest to the FAA. The Commentor mistakenly indicates that FAA is involved in the Airport Sponsor's Request for Proposals to redevelop the existing airport site. FAA has interest in this document to the extent that it relates to future use of land that is currently under federal grant obligations. See response to Comment 6.

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**Comment 54** Hodges FEIS Response (2-5-42): Comment noted? This “purpose and need” is a cornerstone of the Sponsor's project. The FAA should either provide a program that addresses this need nationally or shut down this Sponsor's insistence that it must do something no other airport is required to do.

**Response** See Response to Comment 45 above regarding the FAA's purpose and need. The national program to bring runway safety areas (RSAs) into compliance with FAA standards was recently included as part of the 2006 Appropriations Bill (Pub. L. 109-115, Div. A, Title I, November 30, 2005, 119 Stat. 2401) and requires certificated airports to comply with the FAA design standards for RSAs as cited in 14 CFR Part 139.

**Comment 55** Hodges FEIS Response (2-1-43): If the crosswind alignment is to accommodate Eglin airspace, how is the new airport “reducing the potential conflicts” so important to the FAA? The Sponsor is now considering eliminating the crosswind runway completely – so much for “relocation” - now we are talking about “substitution” of an inferior airport.

**Response** The Commentor is incorrect in stating that the crosswind alignment is to accommodate Eglin airspace. As stated in the response to comment 2-1-43 the proposed runway alignments were developed on the basis of maximizing wind coverage and minimizing potential effects on nearby military airspace. FAA has not received any proposal to eliminate the crosswind runway at the West Bay Site, and the FAA is approving construction of a crosswind runway in the ROD. With respect to the Commentor's original comment 2-1-43, the proposed layout plan, although not providing a perpendicular crosswind runway, does provide adequate wind coverage based upon FAA criteria. There is no requirement that a crosswind runway be placed at a 90 degree angle to the primary runway. Runway orientations are based primarily upon wind conditions at any specific location.

**Comment 56** Hodges FEIS Response (2-1-44): When a comment raises a question requiring an answer, the consultant should seek the answer. I have discussed this issue with Tyndall RAPCON, and they are aware that their radar has line-of-sight limitations at West Bay. There is probably a solution for this, but the solution is not to ignore it. Please investigate.

**Response** The Commentors original comment on the DEIS referred to concerns about the Tyndall AFB RAPCON radar coverage. The FAA has indicated in the FEIS and in response to Comment 2-1-44 that there have been no indications in meetings or written correspondence from Tyndall RAPCON of a radar coverage problem at the West Bay site. In the comment above, the Commentor is incorrect in stating that the Tyndall RAPCON radar has line-of-sight limitations. Line-of-sight refers to unobstructed vision of approach and departure and not radar coverage. If there are limitations associated with the Tyndall RAPCON radar or the operation of the radar then it would be related to the extent of coverage.

**Comment 57** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-45): Redundant.

**Response** It is not clear what the Commentor means by “redundant” and the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.

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- Comment 58** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-46): I have seen the draft of the BCA, and it is very creative, as every attempt to justify this project has been. It is very strange that a marginal project like this would be allowed to burn through \$30 Million in fees without a BCA or risk analysis.
- Response** The Airport Sponsor has indicated that they intend to build the proposed project, which includes an 8,400 foot runway. The FAA decision on the level of funding will not be determined until after the ROD is issued. The ROD is the decision on the EIS, and the FAA decision on funding is a separate process. Under that process, the Airport Sponsor will submit an application for assistance to obtain AIP funds which would be reviewed in the FAA's normal course of business. However, the FAA has advised the sponsor that, at this time, the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway are eligible for AIP funding. This is consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and FAA's independent runway length analysis. The FAA is not in a position to comment on the State of Florida's participation in funding of the project. Preparation of a formal BCA is not required by NEPA.
- Regarding the Commentor's statement that \$30 Million in funds have already been spent on the project, FAA is unable to comment on the accuracy of this statement because FAA has no control over or knowledge of any funds expended other than Federal grant funds. Through March 31, 2006, the FAA is aware that the Sponsor has utilized \$9.67 million in Federal entitlement funds for the completion of the NEPA process.
- Comment 59** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-47): Redundant.
- Response** It is not clear what the Commentor means by "redundant" and the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 60** Hodges FEIS Response (5-4-48): Non-responsive to the broad issues raised. I again request Supplemental or Programmatic EIS to address the total impact of this federal action.
- Response** The original response to the comment directs the Commentor to the section of the EIS where his comment is addressed. See response to Comment 1 above regarding the comment requesting that FAA prepare a Supplemental EIS. See response to Comments 24 and 35 above regarding the comment requesting that FAA prepare a Programmatic EIS.
- Comment 61** Hodges FEIS Response (1-3-56): This is absolutely inane. Once again, you have described the normal aviation environment at small non-hub airports. "High performance super sonic (sic) aircraft" do not behave differently from other aircraft in approach corridors or civil controlled airspace. To invoke "complexity" without stating any objective design or operating parameters is simply spouting jargon that has no meaning to certified participants in the aviation system.

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- Response** Much of the comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response. The use of the term “complex” is in reference to the number of airfield facilities both civilian and military and the number of protected airspace sectors within the region. In order to further separate civilian and military operations and to reduce the potential for conflicts between arrival and departure routes to the commercial service airport and the military bases, the airspace criterion was developed. Therefore, three separate factors were considered: the proximity of the airfield of each alternative to other airfields, primarily Tyndall AFB; the potential effects of the controlled airspace associated with each alternative on Special Use Airspace (SUA); and the potential for conflicts between the routes for each alternative and routes to and from Tyndall AFB and other military facilities.
- Comment 62** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-59): As stated above, the conclusion of all this “analysis” (particularly in the Sponsor's forecast) was flawed. If this project goes forward, the taxpayers will spend \$400 Million to see who is the better forecaster.
- Response** This comment consists of statements of opinion to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 63** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-60): See response 5-5-15.
- Response** FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response to this comment because there is no response number 5-5-15.
- Comment 64** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-61): I don't have the entire 2005 TAF, but I would be surprised if it shows a decrease in traffic for PFN in 2005-2006, but that is actually happening. Apparently the expectations cannot be lowered enough to capture this poor market of high fuel prices, high fares, and bankrupt airlines. See 1-5-58.
- Response** As indicated in Table 1-6 of the FEIS, the 2005 TAF shows forecasted growth for PFN. The remainder of this comment consists of statements of opinion, to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 65** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-65): The FAA's alternatives are neither reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practical to completely analyze this project, for reasons stated repeatedly in these comments.
- Response** The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.
- Comment 66** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-69): this comment was not about the TAF, but the Sponsor's forecast.
- Response** The FAA's TAF was used as the basis of the FAA's EIS, however, the Airport Sponsor's forecast was found to be within an acceptable range of FAA's TAF. Thus, the Airport Sponsor's forecasts were utilized to present to full range of potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed project and the alternatives analyzed in the FEIS.

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- Comment 67** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-70): Non-responsive. Please explain in local terms how a new airport is justified for the incremental differences in traffic between the present airport and ANY of the forecasts. This EIS is apparently written to reach a foregone conclusion, and the authors simply refuse to confront the facts.
- Response** The FEIS documents that the need to accommodate future aviation demand is not specifically meant in terms of the numbers of passengers or the numbers of operations, but in terms of the types of operations and the size and capability of aircraft and the anticipated travel distances of those aircraft. See Section 2.5.2 of the FEIS and the runway length analysis memorandum included in Appendix D of this ROD. The remainder of this comment consists of statements of opinion, to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 68** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-71): The Sponsor has also not proposed a substitute airport that is justified economically or environmentally.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 69** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-72): I presume we agree.
- Response** The response “Comment noted” was not intended to indicate agreement with any particular comment. Rather, “comment noted” indicated that FAA read and considered the comment where the Commentor expressed personal opinion or otherwise offered information to which the FAA could not provide a substantive response.
- Comment 70** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-73): It is possible to cite historic or credible future data, compare data with other markets, and it is especially possible to backtest a forecast to past outcomes. This forecast fails in all, and the authors probably realized it was not reliable.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response. While forecasts are based on independent factors such as historical activity trends and socio-economic data, the Commentor is incorrect that a forecast can be backtested. Forecasts are projections of future activity, and forecasts can be compared with actual activity data in the future.
- Comment 71** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-74): In this case the forecast would assist planners to conclude a new airport is not needed in the forecast period.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 72** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-75): Apparently the “fundamental basis” for the Sponsor's forecast was to develop the most optimistic forecast possible, whether it conformed to FAA variance recommendations or not. The most notable conclusion is that even this distorted forecast falls within the capabilities of the local airport except for the totally unbelievable daily widebody from the UK.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.

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- Comment 73** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-87): I understand that passengers on connecting itineraries are counted to their destination. In a huge hub like Atlanta, many passengers fly over the hub on separate tickets because of internet promotions, gaming the round-trip fare rules, etc. This was a peripheral comment since any Atlanta nonstop traffic is only a 248 mile leg. The real point is that NO nonstop O-D (non-hubbing) city has traffic indicating a nonstop market during the planning period. If this is not correct, please identify the nonstop city.
- Response** Please refer to the memorandum describing the runway length analysis included in Appendix D of this ROD. The memo identified anticipated non-stop markets for PFN through 2018.
- Comment 74** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-88): Fares are the dominant factor, assuming comparable access and frequency.
- Response** The comment above consists of assumptions regarding airport selection by passengers and service provided by airports, as well as statements of opinion, to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 75** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-92): I was present for deregulation and the airline industry over time. What happened to your position that only local factors and not “airline market responses” are relevant?
- Response** The airline industry responds to local factors. Such responses, both historical and anticipated, are factored into aviation demand forecasts. The basis, however, is still local needs.
- Comment 76** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-95): That is good arithmetic. It appears that passengers-per-departure has reached 43. Now, why does this indicate we have a need for a substitute airport?
- Response** .It appears that the Commentor is undertaking some type of averaging analysis of passenger loads, and is employing assumptions with which FAA does not necessarily agree in an effort to discredit the FAA’s EIS. However, it is difficult to determine the exact source of the Commentor’s analysis. As a result, FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 77** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-97): See 1-5-95.
- Response** See the response to Comment 76 above.
- Comment 78** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-99): Non-responsive. Please answer the question. 19-seaters fly the same airspace as 150-seaters. When will this substitution occur?
- Response** The FAA can not state a specific date or even year in which 150-seat aircraft would again serve this market. Such factors are beyond the control of the FAA or the Airport Sponsor. However, over the EIS planning period, the forecasts do project the potential for such service to be introduced to the Airport. In the original comment, the Commentor incorrectly asserts that planning for a facility to accommodate mainline service should not begin until the time that mainline service is introduced. Planning must begin much earlier than such service would be anticipated, given the time to provide facilities for such service.



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- Comment 79** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-100): True, but still subjective. FAA recognizes it cannot evaluate local booster claims so it simply “allows” them. This project is totally based on such claims after exhausting more objective goals.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor to which the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response. The FAA does not initiate airport development projects, rather, the FAA responds to proposals for airport development by conducting an independent and objective evaluation and analysis of the proposal and reasonable alternatives as part of the NEPA process. The FAA may consider the Airport Sponsor’s preferences in evaluating the alternatives that would meet the needs for the National Airspace System and the FAA’s environmental responsibilities.
- Comment 80** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-01): It is common for airlines to give “courtesy” replies and then rely on their own judgment to allocate resources.
- Response** This is not a comment on the FEIS. Therefore, FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 81** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-103): Please be specific – which airplane and which charter opportunity has been lost, and why?
- Response** The FAA is not privy to every inquiry received by the Airport Sponsor regarding potential charter operations. A September 8, 2006 letter from the Airport Sponsor reaffirms their stated purpose and need to accommodate opportunities for international charter service and service by wide-body aircraft which require a primary runway of 8,400 feet. However, as documented in FAA’s EIS, the FAA has not relied upon the expectation of charter service in identifying its purpose and need and has indicated that based on FAA’s TAF and an independent runway analysis, there is a demonstrated need for a 6,800 foot primary runway.
- Comment 82** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-104): I have not been allowed to assume anything not documented – please furnish the basis for this claim, since the entire difference between the existing airport and West Bay has boiled down to one 737 to near hub daily and a mysterious charter market.
- Response** Please see response to Comment 81.
- Comment 83** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-106): Non-responsive jargon.
- Response** It is important to consider all available information for the development of potential future growth rates. The Golf Consultants Group Inc. tournament referenced in the original comment was information provided to the FAA by the Airport Sponsor in support of the need for an 8,400-foot runway. This is just once example of the type of information that was used by the Airport Sponsor to develop anticipated growth rates and alternative forecast scenarios. The FAA used the 2003 TAF as the basis for the EIS analysis and included the *Panama City-Bay County International Airport – Activity Forecasts (Updated Forecasts)* in order to disclose the full range of potential environmental impacts.

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**Comment 84** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-107): I believe you will find the 757-200 quite capable of charter flights from 6300 foot runways. Air Force Two was easily accommodated.

**Response** Capacity is not the purpose and need for the proposed project. The purpose and FAA need for the proposed project is defined in Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2: to ensure that the airport meets FAA design standards and is operated in a safe and efficient manner, to address aviation demand for the air service area, to address the effects of the airport related to noise and land use compatibility, and to address the need identified by the FAA for adequate runway length to accommodate existing and projected aviation demand. The referenced B757 and military aircraft are not representative of regularly scheduled commercial passenger operations because of differing operational requirements of these aircraft. The 757 is not the design aircraft, therefore the runway length calculation is not based upon the aircraft indicated by the Commentor.

**Comment 85** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-109): As an ex-Delta participant in scheduling and aircraft routing activities, I am quite sure this comment is correct, but Delta will probably not put it in writing out of “courtesy”. I can assure you it was not because the runway prevented operating to Atlanta with the available passenger loads, as asserted by the Sponsor. If you have a better reason documented, please give it. Delta's recent actions speak much more clearly, having de-hubbed DFW including nonstop service from PFN, curtailed New York nonstop service in all NW Florida markets, and severely curtailed mainline service in smaller markets and off-peak times in larger markets.

**Response** The FAA acknowledges the comment but is unable to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 86** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-120): Please elaborate on the relevance of 3-pounds-per-airline-flight and 250-pounds-per-cargo-flight on the development of a new airport. What factor is projected to increase cargo to require an 8400-foot or even a 6800 foot runway. Build it and they will come?

**Response** The Commentor appears to be conducting some type of averaging analysis of past cargo activity, which is not relevant to the purpose or need of the project. See Section 2.5.2 of the FEIS.

**Comment 87** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-121): The report stated 14 percent growth of based jet aircraft over a period of years. It failed to state that the actual growth to fulfill this was FOUR jet aircraft. This project suffers from a low base of activity.

**Response** The increase in number of based jet aircraft is not the basis for the proposed project.

**Comment 88** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-126): See previous comments on the relative importance of USAF comments, particularly the comments of Gen. Egginton on the DEIS. Complexity has not been shown to be a controlling factor – it has not even been defined in a way that a knowledgeable commenter can respond to. What is the insuperable deficiency – procedures, proximity, SUA's, TERP's ? Or is it just that profound “complexity” that can be resolved everywhere but in Bay County? It appears that the FAA has decided not to try to devise all reasonable alternatives, just to paper over a decision in advance.

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- Response** The Commentor implies that the letters received from Brigadier General New and Brigadier General Egginton have inappropriately been considered differently in the EIS. General New's letter was provided prior to publication of the DEIS and provides input from the DOD regarding the need to "de-conflict" civil aircraft operations and Tyndall Air Force Base. Thus, this letter was able to be considered in the development and screening of alternatives. By contrast, General Egginton's comments were provided in response to the DEIS, after the proposed action and reasonable alternatives had been crafted, in part, to address the need to de-conflict operations as identified by General New. In FAA's opinion, General Egginton's comments were made with the benefit of these concerns having already been addressed by the alternatives put forth in the EIS, and support the need to ensure that any alternative that the FAA may select as its preferred alternative does not in any way further complicate the complexity of the airspace or hinder the ability of Tyndall AFB to further its mission. It is not the purview of the DOD to identify a preferred alternative for this FEIS. Appropriately, General Egginton's letter does not identify a preferred alternative. The purpose of the "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" criterion is to ensure that any alternative would not increase the potential for airspace conflicts. The remainder of the comment consists of opinion and commentary, to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 89** Hodges FEIS Response ( 4-18-128): Building a new airport is not funded either, but this has not precluded proposing implausible alternatives. Relocating 390 may even occur to accommodate redevelopment of the existing site. Apparently developers are much better at moving road plans than airports who have lost interest in their assets.
- Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 90** Hodges FEIS Response (4-11-129): I stand corrected on re-opening for commercial service but I question whether the airfield was under water for three days. Emergency relief flights operated from PFN.
- Response** The Airport Sponsor has indicated that the airport was closed to commercial operations for approximately three days following Hurricane Opal.
- Comment 91** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-131): Upon re-reading, you are correct about conditional acceptance, but the comments from FAA have never been resolved for the record. Please furnish the Sponsor's replies to the FAA comments.
- Response** The FAA has not received responses to the FAA comments from the Airport Sponsor. There was no requirement for responses. The comments provided to the Airport Sponsor were for the benefit of the Airport Sponsor's planning efforts. In addition, FAA's FEIS does not incorporate the 2000 Feasibility Study forecasts, but rather utilizes the Updated Forecasts of January 2004.
- Comment 92** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-133): FAA is responsible for developing "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" alternatives for this analysis. Arguably, there is not a site entirely within Bay County that can support an 8400-to-12,000 to 2-x-parallel runway airport and not cause irreparable harm the environment. This comment is intended to show that confining the project to Bay County is a desire, not a requirement, and in fact the law has already been changed to allow the Sponsor to operate in other counties. I request that FAA consider this alternative in a Supplemental EIS.

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**Response** FAA evaluated appropriate alternatives pursuant to NEPA as documented in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. The alternatives were geographically limited to Bay County based on identification by the Airport Sponsor that the majority of the airport's passengers in the primary market are come from, or are destined to, Bay County. Further, no Airport Sponsor was identified for a relocation site outside of Bay County. The FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA's choice among alternatives considered in the EIS. See Comment 1 above for more information regarding comments seeking that FAA prepare a Supplemental EIS. The Commentor refers to changes in applicable law, but the FAA is unaware of what changes to applicable law the Commentor is referencing. Therefore, FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 93** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-134): FAA must account for all impacts reasonably expected to flow from the federal action. If FAA allows the Sponsor to advance redevelopment by using the sale proceeds as collateral to finance the federal action before decommissioning PFN, redevelopment becomes an integral part of the project. This "creative financing" violates the FAA's regulations against encumbering a grant-supported airport. The Sponsor has also expressed its intent to assure that the purchaser pursues a DRI and to support the purchaser with resources concerning the existing conditions at the site. FAA must exercise its responsibility. I again request a Supplemental EIS to analyze the impact of redevelopment at the same level of detail as the analysis of the West Bay project.

**Response** The FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA's choice among alternatives considered in the EIS. Please see response to Comment 5 above regarding decommissioning and release associated with the Existing Site, and the request for preparation of a Supplemental EIS.

The Commentor claims that the Airport Sponsor's stated goal of selling the existing airport site for redevelopment "violates the FAA's regulations against encumbering a grant-supported airport." Grant Assurance 5 precludes an airport sponsor from selling, leasing, encumbering or otherwise transferring or disposing of any part of its title to airport property with the approval of the Secretary. Thus, the FAA must approve any encumbrance on title, including the sale of the existing airport site. The Airport Sponsor's use of the Letter of Credit to finance the improvements at the new airport does not violate FAA regulations. See response to Comment 6.

**Comment 94** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-138): See previous responses on the 8400 foot on-site alternative. It is not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable".

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is not able to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 95** Hodges FEIS Response (2-2-142): The screening criterion "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is invalid and arbitrary. This criterion was contrived by a consultant just for this EIS and does not exist in the FAA's own airspace/airport design methodology. FAA's "Airports District Office" did not even seek an official opinion from FAA's airspace experts, relying instead on Sponsor-solicited comments from a (since departed) local unit commander. The current local USAF commander (B/G Egginton) provided additional comments on the DEIS that are included in Vol. III "Response to Comments - Federal, State, and Local Agencies". These comments are considerably more objective and benign in their view of the alternatives. From Gen. Egginton's comment: "Fulfilling this mission requires either the maintenance of the current airspace configuration (SUAs, ATCAAs, and approach/departure corridors) or that the design of any new airport and its associated approach/departure corridors do not interfere with Tyndall's SUAs, ATCAAs, approaches and departures." These comments properly make no mention of the superiority of any potential configuration, and do not request addressing any "potential conflicts" - only that no alternative should reduce the operational space available to Tyndall and thus create actual constraints on Tyndall's mission. FAA is acting arbitrarily if it sets out to relieve "potential conflicts" rather than applying its own resources to the trivial problem of allocating airspace to three airports each 10 miles apart so that all reasonable and prudent alternatives can be evaluated.

**Response** See response to Comment 17 above.

**Comment 96** (2-2-142): If one accepts that the Level 1 screen "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is valid (and I do not for reasons given above), FAA's application of this screen is contradictory and arbitrary. (See Table S-1, "Summary of Alternatives Evaluation - Level 1 - Purpose and Need"). The "No-Action" alternative passes this screen for the obvious reason that it cannot be rationalized away like the "Separate Facilities" alternative, even though all future operations would operate in this supposedly unacceptable "potential conflict" environment, and in fact all likely future operations in the planning period have already been surpassed in the past by the "No-Action" alternative. The "Separate Facilities" alternative is found to fail this screen, even though all future operations would be split between three airspace-standards-compliant airports within approximately 20 miles instead of two airspace-compliant airports within 10 miles, with the supposedly more benign general aviation operations biased toward the airport needing the most relief from alleged "potential conflicts".

**Response** The FAA acknowledges that the No-Action Alternative does not meet the Level 1 evaluation, but is required by NEPA's implementing regulations published by CEQ to be carried forward for detailed analysis. See Section 3.7 of the FEIS. This does not mean that another alternative that does not meet the Level 1 evaluation should be carried forward. See Section 3.3.1 of the FEIS. Please see the response to Comment 18 above regarding Separate Facilities.

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- Comment 97** Hodges FEIS Response (4-18-149): My comment relates to the relative value of expanding the airport vs. cosmetically improving a 2-lane entrance road. In terms of value, this cosmetic project already funded by FDOT was obviously not evaluated for cost-benefit, whereas FAA would now invoke cost as a constraint on SR 390 improvements. In any event, this EIS is supposedly to determine the preferred alternative without regard to cost (or it would not have chosen the most expensive credible alternative). I don't know the scope of the \$50 to \$100M work, but the cost of the substitute airport has passed \$330 Million NOT including funds for the fabled "West Bay Preservation Area". I assume that a prudent Sponsor would not pursue an elaborate on-site alternative, but return to planning and develop a sensible and non-intrusive regional air carrier airport. I wonder what will be cut out of the "vision" when the cost must be reduced?
- Response** The comment above consists of personal commentary and statements of opinion to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 98** Hodges FEIS Response (4-18-150): Thankfully neither of these will be necessary.
- Response** The FAA acknowledges the comment.
- Comment 99** Hodges FEIS Response (4-6-152): The referenced statute language is in the special district act of another airport authority in Florida. The Florida legislature has amended the special act for the Bay County airport district TWICE in the last ten years, and there is no reason to assume it could not be done again, if the proper incentives existed. FAA shows little determination compared to the local developer who proposes to bridge several estuarine islands for development. We will see what happens to the bay, but FDEP will not be the agency that protects it.
- Response** The comment above consists of speculation and statements of opinion, to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.
- Comment 100** Hodges FEIS Response (3-4-153): Ignorance of a policy is not an excuse – the record is full of the history of the Goose Bayou impacts.
- Response** The underlined sentence in the original comment on the Draft EIS addressed the elimination in Level 2 screening of an EMAS alternative that required fill in Goose Bayou. This alternative was eliminated for failure to meet the submerged sovereign lands screening criteria. The comment indicated that such an alternative should never have been proposed due to previously stated concerns of state regulatory agencies about impacts to Goose Bayou. However, an EMAS alternative that would not impact Goose Bayou was evaluated and presented in the Final EIS, which FAA believes addresses the concerns expressed in the original comment regarding inclusion of an EMAS alternative.
- Comment 101** Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-155): See 5-5-134.
- Response** See Response to Comment 93 above.
- Comment 102** Hodges FEIS Response (2-3-163): How is this determined – the Sponsor has offered no market area data except 1 week of passenger data from 1998.
- Response** The market area is described in Section 1.6 of the FEIS.

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**Comment 103** Hodges FEIS Response (2-3-165): Please read the comment again – I believe I said that ATC exists within a broader context. My point is that ONE configuration has been analyzed and the alternatives have been dismissed by waving this “Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization” jargon at it. The conclusion is both arbitrary and contradictory.

**Response** See response to Comment 37 above regarding the need to conduct airspace review during the alternatives screening process.

**Comment 104** Hodges FEIS Response (2-3-166): FAA has taken far too benign a view of the Sponsor's project, spending \$6 Million to essentially say “It makes no difference how we proceed, so we will proceed with the Sponsor.” The facts and the disclosures in this FEIS cry out for a either a different preferred alternative or a Supplemental EIS to develop the real environmental impact. I again request a Supplemental EIS or a Programmatic EIS to analyze both the full impact of the Sector Plan and the redevelopment of the PFN site.

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion and commentary of the Commentor, to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response. The FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA’s choice among alternatives considered in the EIS. See response to Comment 1 above regarding the comment requesting that FAA prepare a Supplemental EIS. See response to Comments 24 and 35 above regarding the comment requesting that FAA prepare a Programmatic EIS.

**Comment 105** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-168): There is a vast difference between “Not Desirable” and “Requires Replacement”. See 2-2-142.

**Response** The FAA acknowledges the comment.

**Comment 106** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-169): The 8400 foot alternative at the existing site is not “reasonable, feasible, practical, or prudent” except in some fantasy world where costs and impacts don't exist. If an 8400 foot airport alternative to the West Bay site is crucial, it cannot be proposed at the existing site. I request a Supplemental EIS to consider a credible 8400 foot alternative.

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response. The FAA has carried forward for detailed evaluation in its EIS only reasonable and feasible alternatives. The FAA does not believe that any information was developed that would meet the CEQ standard for the development of a Supplemental EIS or affect the FAA’s choice among alternatives considered in the EIS. Because the 8,400 foot alternative at the existing site is feasible (see response to Comment 2), the request for a Supplement to address “a credible 8400 foot alternative” is not reasonable and a Supplement is not required.

**Comment 107** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-170): See 3-1-153.

**Response** The FAA acknowledges the comment.

**Comment 108** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-177): The Feasibility study did not find the project to be “justified”, only technically feasible. The Sponsor could have saved FAA \$2.4 Million by just sending FAA a letter asking if it is possible to build a commercial service airport on 4,000 acres with suitable airspace.

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**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion to which the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 109** Hodges FEIS Response (3-1-178): None of the alternatives provide 8400 foot runways on an upland greenfield site. See 3-1-169.

**Response** See response to Comment 2 above. The FAA has identified an adequate and appropriate range of alternatives that include areas where airport development could reasonably occur and has conducted an independent assessment of those alternatives as described in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

**Comment 110** Hodges FEIS Response (3-2-184): See 3-1-177 – in that response FAA relied on the “Feasibility Study 2000” as both justifying and finding technically feasible the Sponsor's project.

**Response** The original response states that the information from the *Feasibility Study* was included in the EIS for disclosure purposes. The FAA did not solely rely on the *Feasibility Study* and conducted its own independent evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives, including the Airport Sponsor’s proposed project. Further, the EIS did not rely on the forecast in the Feasibility Report, but did analyze the FAA’s TAF and the 2004 Airport Sponsor’s forecast. The FAA considered the *Feasibility Study* forecast to be historic/background information.

**Comment 111** Hodges FEIS Response (1-5-188): Section 1.6 says in effect “The service area is where the population is.” It then relies on one week of passenger data that shows the traffic to be overwhelmingly from Bay County, WITHOUT IDENTIFYING WHICH AREA OF BAY COUNTY. It then goes on to speculate that the Sponsor's forecast (asserted over and over to be not used in this FEIS) says the new airport will alter the service area favorably. This flies in the face of the population demographics of Bay County (which is asserted to be the source of virtually all passengers). The new airport site is surrounded by thousands of acres of unpopulated pine plantations, and it will be decades (by the admission of the county planners and the landowner) before any significant population is developed. The Sponsor's project will deprecate air service to the population of Bay County (AKA the “Service Area”) for many years. The only beneficiaries of a new airport are those involved in building it and those (a minority) for which it will be closer. Until some data is provided to the contrary, Section 1.6 is speculative, just like the Sponsor's project.

**Response** The comment above consists of statements of opinion of the Commentor and the FAA is unable to provide a meaningful response.

**Comment 112** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-190): See 2-2-142.

**Response** See Response to Comment 95 above.

**Comment 113** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-192): See 2-2-142.

**Response** See Response to Comment 95 above.

**Comment 114** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-193): See 2-2-142.

**Response** See Response to Comment 95 above.

**Comment 115** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-194): See 3-1-169.



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- Response** See Response to Comment 106 above.
- Comment 116** Hodges FEIS Response (3-3-198): See various previous comments on the improper analysis of the separate facilities alternative.
- Response** Please see the response to Comment 18 above regarding analysis of the separate facilities alternative.
- Comment 117** Hodges FEIS Response (3-4-200): See 3-1-169.
- Response** See Response to Comment 106 above. The FAA believes the response to the Commentor's original comment as included in the FEIS is adequate and complete.
- Comment 118** Hodges FEIS Response (3-4-207): See 3-1-169.
- Response** See Response to Comment 106 above. The Airport Sponsor has proposed development of a replacement airport, including a primary runway length of 8,400'. FAA has analyzed this proposed project, as well as reasonable alternatives, including alternatives that do not meet the Airport Sponsor's identified primary runway length of 8,400'. Consideration of a full range of alternatives, as was done in the FAA's FEIS, facilitates Federal decisionmaking and presents to the public a complete analysis of potential impacts associated with the proposed project and its alternatives. This is the very purpose of NEPA. Finally, this comment contains statements of opinion to which the FAA cannot provide a meaningful response.

1004

Donald R. Hodges  
406 Harvard Boulevard  
Lynn Haven, Florida 32444  
June 28, 2006

Federal Aviation Administration  
Orlando Airports District Office  
5950 Hazeltine National Dr, Suite 400  
Orlando, Florida 32822-5024

Attention: Ms. Virginia Lane, Environmental Specialist

Subject: Comments on Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Proposed Relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport (PFN), Panama City, FL, and Request for Supplemental and/or Programmatic EIS

I adopt by reference the comments and requests for a Programmatic and/or Supplemental EIS by the *Natural Resources Defense Council*.

In the enclosed documents, I have inserted detailed comments in bold text and in the context of the FEIS (*Executive Summary and Volume IV, Responses to Comments, Public Individuals*).

To summarize these detailed comments, FAA has: 1) accepted unsubstantiated forecasts and arguments about purpose and need, 2) inappropriately designed and evaluated runway alternatives, and 3) created and applied inappropriate and subjective criteria for evaluating various airspace configurations, 4) introduced new connected action by the Sponsor that requires preparation of a Supplemental EIS, specifically the encumbrance of the existing site in a sale and redevelopment that is an integral part and/or a connected action of the federal action, including allowing the Sponsor to advertise the site for sale on terms that allow the Sponsor to use the proceeds of the sale as collateral for debt to finance construction of the FAA's preferred alternative (a probable violation of FAA grant agreements already in force), and 5) failed to adequately disclose and analyze the comprehensive effects of the cumulative actions triggered by the federal action, specifically the "West Bay DSAP", the "RiverCamps at Crooked Creek", and the other intensive development of 75,000 acres encompassed in the "Sector Plan Overlay". This Sector Plan, only to be implemented if the FAA's preferred alternative is built, creates a predictable financial cost and environmental impact and/or mitigation, and thus the airport and Sector Plan are "part and parcel" of the broader federal action. These impacts and mitigations should be explained and quantified in a Programmatic EIS, a Supplemental EIS (or both).

The effect of these actions is to consider in the FEIS, several alternatives, including 8400 foot runways, that are not necessary to serve aviation demand in the service area during the planning period, and thus are not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" as required by NEPA. Even if the Sponsor's preferred alternative must be analyzed, FAA has not analyzed a "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" 8400 foot alternative on an upland greenfield site, instead constraining its analysis to arbitrarily selected unsuitable sites including 1) two other wetland-intensive sites and 2) the existing airport site that cannot be prudently or feasibly expanded beyond the 6800 foot runway that is FAA's own determination of the maximum airfield to meet any credible purpose and need during the planning period. In many instances, the analysis is arbitrarily and capriciously biased in favor of the Sponsor's Preferred Alternative. This course of conduct led FAA to extend undue deference to the Sponsor's preferred alternative, whereas an objective analysis would lead to selection of either 1) a 6800 foot alternative on the existing site (thus totally avoiding the devastating impacts at West Bay and arguably causing less impact than from the connected action of redeveloping the site) or 2) an 8400 foot alternative on an upland site that avoids most of the environmental impact and mitigation required at West Bay, or 3) separate facilities comprised of a new one-runway Part 139-certified airport on a minimum-footprint suitable site and retention of the present airport as a general aviation airport.

Furthermore the FEIS has been tainted by using the work product of consultants who have a financial interest in the project. These consultants have a clear conflict of interest as they both "justify" and "evaluate" the financial, technical, and environmental objectives of the Sponsor. Bechtel Infrastructure Inc., PBS&J, and their subconsultants are participating as "experts" in the "Ecosystem Team Permitting" (ETP) process (and the St. Joe Company is not, at least not in public) even though they are both contractors in related matters to both the airport Sponsor and The St. Joe Company. ETP is supposedly an arms-length negotiation of environmental mitigation, including concession of land or land entitlements, by St. Joe to benefit the Sponsor and the federal action that is the subject of this FEIS. These same consultants have consistently steered the project to the site offered as a "donation" by The St. Joe Company, provided that only a site at West Bay be selected. Such conflicting participation violates the principle and perhaps the letter of FAA's policy that prohibits consultants with a financial interest in the outcome to develop Environmental Impact Statements for FAA actions. The ETP process is integral to selection of a preferred alternative and the FAA Record of Decision, because the Sponsor's mitigation plan resulting from ETP is included in the FEIS and cited as a decisive factor in FAA's selection of FAA's preferred alternative. The FEIS is also tainted by authorizing the prime EIS consultant to do approximately \$1 Million worth of work (that at least in part should be the subject of a Supplemental EIS) without properly authorized funding or a written change order and subsequently misrepresenting this work as "to be done in the future" when in fact it was already substantially complete.

FAA's course of conduct in two other areas is of concern:

1. FAA has entered a contract to re-locate the VORTAC navaid from the existing airport to (presumably) the new airport, despite the fact that FAA should not participate in construction of a new airport before the NEPA process is finished.
2. FAA has provided a "draft" siting study for a new ATCT at the Sponsor's preferred site, and the Sponsor is proceeding with construction drawings based on this "draft" after being assured that the siting study will not be changed by the NEPA process.

Both of these actions are further evidence that the selection of FAA's preferred alternative and the forthcoming ROD are mere formalities and the FAA has not processed the EIS in good faith, instead acting arbitrarily and capriciously to favor (and indeed accelerate) the Sponsor's project despite FAA's own requirement to complete the NEPA process before approving an Airport Layout Plan and funding construction.

The NEPA process is one of the few opportunities for patient, objective, and long-term evaluation of such a significant project that will permanently alter environmental processes in place for thousands of years. FAA should strive for the utmost objectivity and attention to its legal responsibilities under NEPA. Due to the disclosure of significant additional scope of the federal action and connected actions, I request that a Supplemental DEIS or a Programmatic EIS (or both) including public hearing and comment, be prepared. I also request a copy of any Supplemental EIS, Programmatic EIS, and the FAA Record of Decision.

Sincerely,



Donald R. Hodges

Enclosures:

Hodges Comments (embedded in FEIS Executive Summary and FEIS Vol IV)

cc: Inspector General – U.S. Department of Transportation

## FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

### PROPOSED RELOCATION OF THE PANAMA CITY- BAY COUNTY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

### FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

### SUMMARY

#### About the Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to disclose the potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport (PFN) to a new site in Bay County, Florida. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a cooperating federal agency for this FEIS, having jurisdiction by law because the proposed federal action has the potential for significant wetland impacts.

#### The Proposed Project

The Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District (the Airport Sponsor) is the owner and operator of the existing airport (Existing Site) and the project sponsor for the proposed relocated airport at the West Bay Site (Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project). The St. Joe Company currently owns the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project site and would donate the site to the Airport Sponsor pursuant to a written agreement. In addition, the St. Joe Company would also donate additional acreage for any wetland mitigation that may be required for the development of a relocated airport.

The Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project would accommodate airfield development for both short- and long-term aviation needs without being constrained by natural or man-made features. Initial development components (anticipated to open in 2008) would consist of airfield and terminal facilities, and include a primary air carrier runway of 8,400 feet and a general aviation crosswind runway of 5,000 feet. This system would be supported by the necessary ancillary facilities including parallel and connecting taxiways, terminal area facilities, general aviation facilities, air traffic control and emergency service facilities, lighting, and navigation facilities. The proposed relocation of airport facilities and the anticipated initial development components of the relocated airport are analyzed in this FEIS.

Should the FAA select the proposed project for approval, the Airport Sponsor intends to sell the Existing Site for possible redevelopment. Although the party that purchases the airport property will ultimately determine how to redevelop the property, the Airport Sponsor undertook to identify initial redevelopment proposals based on public input. As a result of that process, the Airport Sponsor prepared a document called the *Background Analysis and Master Planning Report for Redevelopment* (Redevelopment Report) which identified three potential redevelopment scenarios. See Appendix V of the FEIS. The FAA has used that document to prepare a composite redevelopment scenario, and the potential environmental impacts of this composite scenario have been analyzed in the FEIS for disclosure purposes. This topic is discussed in greater detail in Sections 2.2.3 and 5.1 of this FEIS. Although impacts of potential redevelopment of the Existing Site are analyzed in this FEIS under the West Bay Site alternatives, there are additional federal actions that the FAA would have to take before the Airport Sponsor could sell the Existing Site for redevelopment. These actions include release of the Airport Sponsor from Federal grant obligations and decommissioning of the existing airport. If the FAA approves a West Bay Site alternative, the FAA cannot decommission the existing airport or release the

**Hodges FEIS Comment:** The Sponsor is proceeding (with the FAA's knowledge and apparent consent, (see FEIS Vol. II, Appendix "V") to offer the parcel for sale under terms that will allow the Sponsor to use the Purchaser's irrevocable Letter of Credit as collateral to finance the project. This is apparently a "sham transaction" to circumvent the Sponsor's grant obligations to FAA. If the FAA allows this connecting of the sale/redevelopment to the construction of the FAA's preferred alternative, it reinforces the necessity for a Supplemental EIS to address in detail the connected action. At very least, the FAA should act to recover its grant amounts from the Sponsor if the Sponsor proceeds with monetizing the existing site by any method. 6

Depending upon aviation growth in the Panama City vicinity and the Airport Sponsor's long-term needs, the Proposed Project could be expanded at a later time to include an extension of the primary air carrier runway, a second parallel air carrier runway, and additional landside facilities. This ultimate development of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project site is disclosed in this FEIS for information purposes only.

The Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is shown on a Draft Airport Layout Plan that was submitted to the FAA for review in June 2004.

#### **FAA's Environmental Responsibilities**

*The primary purpose of an EIS is to ensure that the policies and goals of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) are considered in ongoing programs and actions of the federal government. An EIS provides a full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts associated with major federal actions and informs decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment. The Agency's preferred alternative is the alternative that meets the federal purpose and need while minimizing environmental impacts to the extent possible.*

**Hodges FEIS Comment:** In this FEIS, FAA selects a preferred alternative that goes far beyond any credible Federal purpose and need and does not minimize environmental impacts to the extent possible. FAA's own analysis finds that a 6800 foot runway fulfills the FAA's criteria for the planning period. By introducing 8400 foot alternatives that are not feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable FAA has isolated the Sponsor's preferred alternative as the only alternative that fulfill's both FAA's and the Sponsor's preference. The 8400 foot alternatives used by FAA were either on obviously inferior wetland sites or on the existing airport site that cannot feasibly, reasonably, prudently, or practicably support an 8400 foot runway. Specifically, the 8400 foot runway would require urban land acquisition, tunneling for a 6-lane state highway under the runway, and displacement of hundreds of houses/businesses. Although FAA blithely uses these devastating impacts to reject the on-site alternative, it ignores the fact that these impacts are simply not plausible as feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable under the ordinary meaning of these terms. Although it is not even necessary to consider 8400 foot alternatives to fulfill the federal purpose and need, if such alternatives are allowed they should be on sites that are equivalent or superior to the Sponsor's alternative, such as upland greenfield sites. Considering these new alternatives will require a Supplemental EIS. 7

**alternatives are allowed they should be on sites that are equivalent or superior to the Sponsor's alternative, such as upland greenfield sites. Considering these new alternatives will require a Supplemental EIS.**

The FAA is the agency responsible for reviewing and approving federal actions that pertain to airports and their operations and, therefore, is the lead federal agency for this EIS. On November 7, 2001, the FAA published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment to consider alternatives to meet forecast growth in aviation demand in the Panama City-Bay County region and to respond to the Airport Sponsor's proposal to relocate the existing airport to meet this forecast demand. Agency and public scoping meetings were held on December 13, 2001. Following a review of written comments submitted by federal, state, and local governmental agencies and the public, and a review of available information regarding the potential for significant environmental impacts, including impacts to wetlands, the FAA determined that an EIS would be prepared for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. The FAA subsequently issued a *Federal Register* notice on April 23, 2002 announcing its intent to prepare an EIS. In addition to the public and agency scoping meetings held in December 2001, a public workshop was held in May 2003 to receive additional comments from interested parties. The DEIS was released for public review in November 2004. A public workshop and public hearing were held on January 11, 2005. See **Chapter Six** and **Appendix Q** of the FEIS. Correspondence from tribal organizations was also solicited. See **Appendix M** of the FEIS.

### Cooperating Agency

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has agreed to participate as a cooperating agency for this FEIS, having jurisdiction by law due to the potential for significant wetland impacts associated with implementation of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. If the Proposed Project is implemented, it would require a Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act of 1972 due to impacts to Waters of the United States.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: I adopt and incorporate by reference the comments of the Natural Resources Defense Council regarding the obligations and actions of the USACE.**

### Document Organization

The format and content of this FEIS is substantially similar to the format suggested by CEQ in its regulations implementing NEPA. The FEIS is comprised of five volumes:

**Volume I** – FEIS Documentation – contains the text of analysis and associated tables and figures of the FEIS. **Chapter One** provides a description of the Proposed Project, facilities and condition of the existing airport, airspace and air traffic control at the Existing Site, the air service area, and aviation forecasts for the area. In **Chapter Two** the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is described in detail, and the purpose and need is explained and defined. **Chapter Three** presents the range of alternatives considered to achieve the purpose and need, and through a screening process, presents those alternatives the FAA considers to be reasonable, feasible, practicable, and prudent. The alternatives evaluated in the FEIS include the No-Action Alternative (no extensions to the existing airfield runways, including no construction-related improvements to currently deficient runway safety areas). Chapter Three identifies the FAA's preferred alternative. Chapter Three also includes the USACE alternatives evaluation process, evaluation of alternatives, and the Applicant's (Airport Sponsor's) preferred alternative the USACE considered in the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit application. **Chapter Four** provides a description of the human, physical, and natural environments in the study area and in the vicinity of the Existing Site and the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project Site in northwestern Bay County (the West Bay Site). **Chapter Five** describes the potential benefits and adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with the alternatives carried forward from Chapter Three, including cumulative impacts. **Chapter Six**

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement – Proposed Relocation of Panama City – Bay County International Airport**

the FAA's preferred alternative. Chapter Three also includes the USACE alternatives evaluation process, evaluation of alternatives, and the Applicant's (Airport Sponsor's) preferred alternative the USACE considered in the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit application. **Chapter Four** provides a description of the human, physical, and natural environments in the study area and in the vicinity of the Existing Site and the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project Site in northwestern Bay County (the West Bay Site). **Chapter Five** describes the potential benefits and adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with the alternatives carried forward from Chapter Three, including cumulative impacts. **Chapter Six** summarizes the coordination and public involvement activities conducted for the EIS. **Chapter Seven** lists the preparers of the FEIS. **Chapter Eight** lists the parties to whom the FEIS will be distributed. **Chapter Nine** is the bibliography for the FEIS. **Chapter Ten** is the list of abbreviations, acronyms, and glossary of terms. **Chapter Eleven** is the index.

**Volume II**– Appendices – contains various appendices to the FEIS related to technical information, correspondence and coordination, and other reference materials.

**Volume III** – Responses to Comments (Federal, State, and Local Agencies) – contains all comments received on the DEIS from federal, state, and local agencies. These comments have been summarized and responses are provided.

**Volume IV**- Responses to Comments (Public Individuals) – contains all comments received on the DEIS from public individuals. These comments have been summarized and responses are provided.

**Volume V**- Responses to Comments (Public Organizations) – contains all comments received on the DEIS from public organizations. These comments have been summarized and responses are provided.

### **Background**

**Air Service Area** – The primary commercial service area for PFN encompasses all of Bay County, western Gulf County, and southeastern Walton County. A secondary commercial service area from which PFN has the ability to capture a limited share of the air service demand has been identified as including the southern and western areas of Franklin County (accessed via U.S. 98), areas of Washington County (accessed via Highway 77), Calhoun County (accessed via Highway 20 to U.S. 231, Highway 22 to U.S. 98) and Jackson County (accessed via Highway 77 and U.S. 231).

**Hodges FEIS Comment: See comments on FEIS Vol. IV regarding the inferiority of the preferred site to serve the air service market in this area.** ] 9

**Aviation Activity and Forecasts** – Airport sponsors typically prepare forecasts of aviation demand for specific planning studies (e.g., master plans, system plans) and for financial purposes (e.g., the sale of revenue bonds). The FAA prepares and updates its Terminal Area Forecasts (TAF) every year to establish staffing and other resource requirements to serve anticipated aviation demand nationally and at individual air traffic control facilities.

In the preparation of an EIS, the FAA reviews current operational data and known trends to determine which set of forecasts provides the best basis for the assessment of potential environmental effects. The Airport Sponsor prepared aviation forecasts in 2000, and because of the events that have occurred since that time, and as a part of the ongoing planning process, the Airport Sponsor prepared *Updated Forecasts* and presented them to FAA in January 2004. According to the Airport Sponsor, the *Updated Forecasts* reflect an evaluation of the potential for an airport located at the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project site to serve 1) a larger percentage of travelers in the overall air service area, and 2) potential international charter service. During the same time period, FAA prepared the 2003 TAF, released in February 2004. The FAA 2003 TAF prepared for PFN is used in this FEIS. The 2005 TAF, published in February 2006, is included in the FEIS for comparison. The *Updated Forecasts* prepared by the Airport Sponsor also have been used in the evaluation of the potential effects of the Proposed Project and the alternatives to ensure that the analyses presented in the FEIS fully disclose the range of potential effects.



**Hodges FEIS Comment: The Sponsor's Updated Forecast is not credible for many reasons cited in my comments on the DEIS and my responses to FAA responses to those comments. Analyzing the aircraft operations inferred by this defective forecast acknowledges an aircraft type that can only be supported by the Sponsor's preferred alternative. FAA is trying to have it both ways: disavowing a forecast and then using it to posit operations that its own expert analysis cannot foresee. In the absence of these spurious operations, there is absolutely no reason to consider a runway longer than 6800 feet during the planning period.**

10

**Airport Sponsor's Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project**

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to develop aviation facilities that meet FAA safety and design standards, operate and grow the airport without physical constraints, prepare for future opportunities to expand air carrier service, and plan future aviation development that is compatible with local and regional planning objectives. The reasons for these objectives are described as specific needs of the Airport Sponsor.

*Meet FAA Safety and Design Standards* – this need includes meeting FAA standards for runway safety areas, object free areas, and object free zones, and to provide runway protection zones that are clear of incompatible objects and activities.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: This need can be met by several of the 6800 foot alternatives at the existing site.**

11

*Operate and Grow the Airport Without Physical Constraints* – this need addresses the constraints of the Existing Site with regards to aircraft operations and expansion of airport facilities. These constraints include surrounding residential developments, SR 390 and its proposed widening, and protected waters of Goose Bayou.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: Every airport would prefer to be unconstrained in any way, but this airport has not shown a need to expand to the extent it prefers. All of the valid needs can be met without the Sponsor's proposed project.**

12

*Prepare for Future Opportunities for Accommodating Projected Demand and Expansion Opportunities* – this includes the Airport Sponsor's identified need for a full-service air carrier runway 8,400 feet long by 150 feet wide and a crosswind runway of 5,000 feet long by 100 feet wide. These runways would be needed to accommodate a family of narrow-body jet aircraft operations within the next 20 years without payload restrictions, to meet anticipated demand for international charter operations, to attract new air carrier service to Bay County and allow for large military transports to use the airport. When warranted by demand, the Airport Sponsor has identified the need to plan for an ultimate extension of the primary air carrier runway up to 12,000 feet, and to provide a second parallel air carrier runway of 8,400 feet. The Airport Sponsor has also identified the need to provide flexibility at the airport in the siting, sizing, and configuration of the airfield and to develop landside facilities to meet aviation demand.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: Nothing in this FEIS indicates a plausible “Projected Demand” during the FAA-sanctioned planning period that cannot be met by an on-site alternative. “Expansion Opportunities” that will require a 12,000 foot runway or a parallel runway are so far in the future as to be meaningless in this FEIS. FAA has only analyzed the proposed project; unless the “expansion opportunities” are actually proposed they are extraneous.**

13

*Plan Future Aviation Development That is Compatible With Local and Regional Planning Objectives*

– In response to projected population growth in the region, the Airport Sponsor is planning for long-range development that would also be compatible with airport location and operations. Bay County initiated a State of Florida Optional Sector Plan process in 1999 for a 75,000-acre area in western Bay County (area known as West Bay) near County Road 388 and State Roads 77 and 79. The Sector planning process is implemented through a long-term conceptual build-out overlay and detailed specific area plans (DSAP). An Airport DSAP has been prepared and approved for the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project site. A West Bay DSAP has been prepared and approved for a 16,556-acre area adjacent to, and southwest of, the Airport DSAP. The West Bay DSAP includes residential, commercial, light industrial, conservation, and agricultural/timberland uses. Through the planning process, state, regional, and county goals have been established for development in this 75,000-acre area, including land use, environment, and transportation goals. These goals are indicative of the long-term opportunity for planning and compatible land development in Bay County, and more specifically in the West Bay area.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: All of the parties to the Sector Plan are not disclosed above. The St. Joe Company joined Bay County in a contract to develop the Sector Plan, after St. Joe offered to donate land for an airport in a circumscribed area along CR 388 and West Bay. A circular argument was carried through a series of “facilitated” public meetings that did not allow any options that did not include an airport. The argument is this: “A new airport is coming – we must make a plan to accommodate it.” (Pause for collecting suggestions, except no suggestions without an airport.) (Reconvene meeting.) “We have devised a plan for the West Bay Sector – a new airport will be the keystone of the plan, and a preponderance of the other developments in the plan will not occur unless the airport is built.” In short, “The airport needs a plan” - “here is a plan that needs an airport.” The entire process has flowed from the offer by St. Joe, not from any objective aviation need. The same consultants who devised the sector plan for the Sponsor, St. Joe, and Bay County (and in various degrees the Feasibility Study, Site Selection Study, ETP, Draft ALP, existing-airport sale documents and various engineering documents) have now been allowed to participate in the mitigation plan for the FAA’s preferred alternative. These financial incentives have tainted the FEIS and all work product of these consultants should be deleted and re-done in a Supplemental EIS.**

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**Final Environmental Impact Statement – Proposed Relocation of Panama City – Bay County International Airport**

The FAA evaluated the development of aviation facilities for the Panama City region based on the criteria set forth in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). The nine goals set forth in the NPIAS are: 1) airports should be safe and efficient; located at optimum sites, and developed and maintained to appropriate standards; 2) airports should be affordable to users and government; 3) airports should be flexible and expandable; 4) airports should be permanent, with assurances that they will remain open for aeronautical use over the long-term; 5) airports should be compatible with surrounding communities; 6) airports should be developed in concert with improvements to the air traffic control system; 7) the airport system should support national objectives for defense and emergency readiness; 8) the airport system should be extensive, providing as many persons as possible access to air transportation, with typical travel distances of 20 miles or less to the nearest NPIAS airport; and 9) the airport system should help air transportation to contribute to a productive national economy and international competitiveness.

In keeping with these goals, the FAA has identified the following specific needs:

- Ensure that the airport meets FAA design standards and is operated in a safe and efficient manner;
- Address aviation demand for the Panama City-Bay County air service area;
- Address the effects of PFN airport expansion related to noise and land use compatibility; and
- Address the need identified by the FAA for adequate runway length to accommodate existing and projected aviation demand.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: It appears the FAA has identified no federal purpose for the project, and the FEIS in fact finds that the needs listed above can all be met without selecting the Sponsor's environmentally devastating project and its connected action of redeveloping the existing site.**

15

USACE Purpose and Need

**Hodges FEIS Comment: I adopt and incorporate by reference the comments of the Natural Resources Defense Council regarding the obligations and actions of the USACE.**

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**Table S-2  
Summary of Alternatives Evaluation  
Level 2 – Environmental and Community Impacts**

Alternative	Environmental Impacts	Community Impacts			Retain For Further Analysis
	Florida Class II Waters <sup>2</sup> / Seagrass <sup>3</sup> (acres)	Relocations <sup>4</sup>	Community Disruption		
<b>Action<sup>1</sup></b>	0/0	None	None		Yes
<b>Location Sites</b>					
at Bay Site 6,800' Scenario	0/0	None	None		Yes
at Bay Site 6,800' Scenario	0/0	None	None		Yes
at Bay Site 8,400'	0/0	None	None		Yes
<b>Relocating Site</b>					
<b>End Runway 14-32</b>					
o 6,800'	0/0	106 SF (9 OR), 0 MH, 15 B	2.35% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 46 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		Yes
o 8,400'	0/0	207 SF, 0 MH, 15 B	4.74% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 90 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		Yes
to 6,800'	20.4/6.2	0 SF, 0 MH, 14 B	1.04 % of the tax base would be lost from Bay County.		No
Directions to 6,800'	10.2/2.1	22 SF, 0 MH, 14 B	0.92 % of the tax base would be lost; 10 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		No
Declared Distance	17.5/4.5	0 SF, 0 MH, 13 B	0.41% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County.		No
EMAS Scenario 1	9.3/1.3	0 SF, 0 MH, 13 B	0.41% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County.		No
EMAS Scenario 2	0/0	49 SF, 0 MH, 17 B	2.0% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 21 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		Yes
EMAS Scenario 3	4.2/0	22 SF, 0 MH, 4 B	1.0% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 10 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		No
to 8,400'	48.4/27.6	0 SF, 0 MH, 14 B	0.44% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County.		No
Directions to 8,400'	10.2/2.1	142 SF, 0 MH, 15 B	3.13% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 62 students would be displaced from 3 schools; availability of comparable replacement housing is likely.		No
<b>End Runway 5-23</b>					
to 6,800'	0/0	226 SF, 80 MH, 3 MF, 1 B	7.22% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 146 students would be displaced from 3 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely.		No
to 6,800'	0/0	301 (26 OR) SF, 0 MH, 8 MF, 1 B	7.09% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 146 students would be displaced from 6 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely.		No
Directions to 6,800'	0/0	255 SF, 80 MH, 43 MF, 1 B	8.03% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 178 students would be displaced from 6 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely.		No
to 8,400'	0/0	319 SF (36 OR), 80 MH, 3 MF, 1 B	8.90% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 218 students would be displaced from 3 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely; increase in commute and emergency response time due to extensive rerouting of access roads.		No
to 8,400'	0/0	338 SF (36 OR), 0 MH, 82 MF, 1 B	8.25% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 198 students would be displaced from 6 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely; increase in commute and emergency response time due to extensive rerouting of access roads.		No
Directions to 8,400'	0/0	372 F (36 OR), 80 MH, 18 MF, 1 B	10.6% of the tax base would be lost from Bay County; 221 students would be displaced from 6 schools; shortage of comparable replacement housing likely; increase in commute and emergency response time due to extensive rerouting of access roads.		No

<sup>1</sup>-Action Alternative carried through EIS for regulatory compliance and basis for comparison.

<sup>2</sup>presents acreage of encroachment into Goose Bayou and/or major streams associated with Goose Bayou / Robinson Bayou. The acreage of impacts to Class II Waters includes the submerged grass habitat within Goose Bayou.

<sup>3</sup>seagrass habitat estimated from mapping and data from *Florida Atlas of Marine Resources, Version 1.2 (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, July 1998)*.

<sup>4</sup> = Single Family Residence, MH = Mobile Home, MF = Multi-Family Residence, B = Business, OR = Orphaned Residence

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. 2004.

### **Final Environmental Impact Statement – Proposed Relocation of Panama City – Bay County International Airport**

project. The applicant for the Section 404 permit under consideration in this FEIS is the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District (Airport Sponsor).

In evaluating permit applications for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, the USACE is required to consider whether a proposed project is water-dependent based on the basic purpose of the project, and to consider practicable alternatives based on the overall purpose of the project.

*Basic Purpose* —Development of commercial and civil air transportation facilities.

*Overall Purpose* —Development of air transportation facilities, which would meet FAA safety and design standards, which could operate and grow to allow future opportunities for expansion of air transportation

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services, including international charter operations, and which would be compatible with local and regional comprehensive planning efforts within the region centered on Bay County, Florida.

**Alternatives**

Chapter Three describes the screening process that was used by the FAA to evaluate the alternatives; describes the alternatives considered and evaluated, including the No-Action Alternative; provides explanation and discussion as to why some alternatives were eliminated from detailed study; describes the reasonable alternatives that were retained for detailed study; and, includes a comparative analysis of the alternatives retained for detailed study. Chapter Three discloses the FAA’s preferred alternative. Chapter Three also includes the USACE alternatives evaluation process, evaluation of alternatives, and the Applicant’s (Airport Sponsor’s) preferred alternative the USACE considered in the CWA Section 404 permit application.

As a result of comments received on the DEIS, the FAA evaluated three additional alternatives in the FEIS (See Chapter Three).

Alternatives analyzed in Chapter Three include:

- No-Action Alternative
- Other Modes of Transportation and Telecommunication;
- Use of Other Airports (including commercial and general aviation airports)
- Joint Use of Tyndall Air Force Base
- Separate Commercial and General Aviation Facilities
- Airport Relocation Sites (West Bay Site, Callaway Site, and East Bay/West Gulf Site)
- Existing Site Alternatives (Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet; Extend Runway 14-32 to 8,400 Feet; Extend Runway 14-32 with Declared Distances; Extend Runway 14-32 with Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS Scenario 1); Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet (EMAS Scenario 2); Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet (EMAS Scenario 3); Extend Runway 5-23 to 6,800 Feet; and Extend Runway 5-23 to 8,400 Feet)

**Alternatives Evaluation Process**

<b>Table S-1 Summary of Alternatives Evaluation Level 1 — Purpose and Need</b>				
Alternative	Criteria			
	Meets FAA Safety and Design Standards	Compatibility w/Airspace Configuration/Utilization	Provides for Demand Within the Market Area	Retained for Further Analysis
<b>No-Action *</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Other Alternatives</b>				
Other Modes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Other Airports	Yes	No	No	No
Tyndall Joint Use	No	No	No	No
Separate Facilities	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Relocation Sites</b>				

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West Bay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Callaway	Yes	No	Yes	No
East Bay/West Gulf	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Existing Site</b>				
<b>Extend Runway 14-32</b>				
SE to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NW to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Both Directions to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NW to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Both Directions to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With Declared Distances	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With EMAS Scenario 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With EMAS Scenario 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With EMAS Scenario 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Extend Runway 5-23</b>				
SW to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NE to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Both Directions to 6,800'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SW to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NE to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Both Directions to 8,400'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* The No-Action Alternative includes no construction at the Existing Site. The No-Action Alternative is carried through the EIS as a basis for comparison as required by CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14).

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, 2005.

**FAA Alternatives Evaluation Process**

A two-tier evaluation process was used to evaluate the alternatives in this FEIS. Level 1 evaluated the range of alternatives to determine which alternatives met the federal purpose and need for the Proposed Project. The Level 1 screening criteria provided for a “Yes” or “No” result. Under Level 1 screening, an alternative would need to: meet FAA safety and design standards; be compatible with airspace configuration utilization; and provide for demand within the market area. Level 2 screening evaluated the alternatives remaining from Level 1 using criteria based on potential environmental impacts to Florida Class II Waters, seagrass habitat, and community impacts based on residential and business relocations and community disruption.

Sections 3.5 and 3.6 summarize how each alternative relates to the Level 1 screening criteria. Based on the results of the Level 1 screening, the following alternatives were not carried forward to the Level 2 evaluation: other modes of transportation and telecommunication; use of other airports; joint use of Tyndall Air Force Base; separate commercial and general aviation facilities; the Callaway relocation site, and the East Bay/West Gulf relocation site. **Table S-1** summarizes those alternatives reviewed in the

and the East Bay/West Gulf relocation site. **Table S-1** summarizes those alternatives reviewed in the Level 1 analysis, the Level 1 criteria, and whether or not the alternative met the Level 1 criteria. The No-Action Alternative was carried forward for further analysis as required by CEQ regulations (Section 1502.14).

**Hodges FEIS Comment: The screening criterion "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is invalid and arbitrary. This criterion was contrived by a consultant just for this EIS and does not exist in the FAA's own airspace/airport design methodology. FAA's "Airports District Office" did not even seek an official opinion from FAA's airspace experts, relying instead on Sponsor-solicited comments from a (since departed) local unit commander. The current local USAF commander (B/G Egginton) provided additional comments on the DEIS that are included in FEIS Vol. III "Response to Comments - Federal, State, and Local Agencies". These comments are considerably more objective and benign in their view of the alternatives. From Gen. Egginton's comment: "Fulfilling this mission requires either the maintenance of the current airspace configuration (SUAs, ATCAAs, and approach/departure corridors) or that the design of any new airport and its associated approach/departure corridors do not interfere with Tyndall's SUAs, ATCAAs, approaches and departures." These comments properly make no mention of the superiority of any potential configuration, and do not request addressing any "potential conflicts" - only that no alternative should reduce the operational space available to Tyndall and thus create actual constraints on Tyndall's mission. FAA is acting arbitrarily if it sets out to relieve "potential conflicts" rather than applying its own resources to the trivial problem of allocating airspace to three airports each 10 miles apart so that all reasonable and prudent alternatives can be evaluated.**

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If one accepts that the Level 1 screen "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is valid (and I do not for reasons given above), FAA's application of this screen is contradictory and arbitrary. (See Table S-1, "Summary of Alternatives Evaluation - Level 1 - Purpose and Need"). The "No-Action" alternative passes this screen for the obvious reason that it cannot be rationalized away like the "Separate Facilities" alternative, even though all future operations would operate in this supposedly unacceptable "potential conflict" environment, and in fact all likely future operations in the planning period have already been surpassed in the past by the "No-Action" alternative. The "Separate Facilities" alternative is found to fail this screen, even though all future operations would be split between three airspace-standards-compliant airports within approximately 20 miles instead of two airspace-compliant airports within 10 miles, with the supposedly more benign general aviation operations biased toward the airport needing the most relief from alleged "potential conflicts".

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The “separate facilities” alternative was arbitrarily screened out despite the fact that it would preclude all of the impacts from redevelopment, and allow the new airport’s “footprint” and impacts to be reduced. This action defies the logic that other Sponsors and FAA have followed so successfully: use an existing airport as long as it is viable, then build an additional airport to expand air carrier operations, but do not destroy a unique general aviation asset just for a marginal improvement. This approach is also the lowest-cost and lowest-impact alternative that meets both the Sponsor’s and the federal purpose and need.

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The Sponsor contends that the proceeds from selling PFN are essential to the project, yet the Florida legislature and FAA have already increased their appropriation plans by more than the expected proceeds. (FAA’s “share” has gone from \$70 Million to over \$100 Million, and FDOT’s “share” has gone from \$70 Million to over \$130 Million). Patrons who can raise their support by \$90 Million for the same project should have no problem finding the \$55 Million to offset expected sale proceeds.

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Section 3.10 summarizes the results of the Level 2 screening. The Level 2 criteria and the evaluation of the alternatives against those criteria are summarized in **Table S-2**. Based on the results of the Level 2 screening, the following alternatives did not meet the Level 2 criteria: Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Northwest; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Both Directions; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32 with Declared Distances; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32 with EMAS Scenario 1; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32 with EMAS Scenario 3; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Northwest; Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Both Directions; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet Southwest; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet Northeast; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet Both Directions; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Southwest; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Northeast; Existing Site, Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Both Directions.



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In addition to the No-Action Alternative and the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project, five alternatives were carried forward for detailed environmental evaluation. These alternatives include airfield facilities with varying runway lengths and associated ancillary facilities. Three of the build alternatives are located at the Existing Site and three are located at the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project site (West Bay Site). The alternatives carried forward for detailed environmental analysis are described as:

- No-Action Alternative (See Figure S-1)
- Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Southeast (See Figure S-2)
- Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32 6,800 Feet EMAS Scenario 2 (added in response to comments on DEIS) (See Figure S-2A)
- Existing Site, Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Southeast (See Figure S-3)
- West Bay Site, 6,800-Foot Scenario 1 (See Figure S-4)
- West Bay Site, 6,800-Foot Scenario 2 (added in response to comments on DEIS) (See Figure S-4A)
- West Bay Site, 8,400-Foot (Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project) (See Figure S-5)

**Hodges FEIS Comment: The existing site 8400 foot alternative is not feasible, reasonable, prudent, or practicable under the ordinary meaning of these terms. If an 8400 foot alternative other than the Sponsor's is to be considered, it should either be on a third and less vulnerable site or be a reduced-scope project as part of separate facilities for airlines (and voluntary relocated GA) and general aviation. I request a Supplemental EIS to introduce and analyze such an alternative.**

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### USACE Alternatives Evaluation Process

Section 3.11 presents the alternatives evaluation process the USACE used in this FEIS. The USACE considers in detail only those reasonable alternatives that are feasible, and that such feasibility must focus on the accomplishment of the underlying purpose and need of the applicant or public, that would be satisfied by the proposed federal action (permit issuance by the USACE). The USACE reviewed the Airport Sponsor's statement of purpose and need and concurred with it. From the Airport Sponsor's statement of purpose and need, the USACE developed both a Basic Purpose and an Overall Purpose, as identified in Section 2.5.3 of this FEIS, to guide its evaluation. From the Airport Sponsor's statement of purpose and need and the USACE's statement of overall purpose, the USACE developed three purpose and need criteria: 1) Would the alternative meet FAA safety and design standards, 2) Would the alternative provide for a facility that could operate and grow to allow future opportunities for expansion of air transportation services, including international charter operations, within the region centered on Bay County, Florida; and 3) Would the alternative provide for a facility that is compatible with local and regional comprehensive planning efforts within the region centered on Bay County, Florida? Using these criteria, the USACE initially reviewed the alternatives, as identified in Section 3.2 of this FEIS, to determine which alternatives satisfy the applicant's (i.e., Airport Sponsor) purpose and need, and thus which alternatives would be retained for further review by the USACE in this FEIS.

Section 3.12 presents the alternatives, as listed and described in Section 3.2 of this FEIS, with a determination as to whether an alternative met or failed to meet the purpose and need evaluation criteria, as defined by the USACE. Alternatives (other than the No-Action Alternative), which failed to meet the purpose and need evaluation criteria, were not retained for further consideration and evaluation by the USACE. Based on the USACE's evaluation, the following alternatives were identified by the USACE as neither reasonable nor feasible due to their failure to satisfy the accomplishment of the underlying purpose and need, as identified by the USACE for this project:

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- Other Modes of Transportation and Telecommunication
- Use of Other Airports
- Joint Use of Tyndall Air Force Base
- Separate Commercial and General Aviation Facilities
- Callaway Relocation Site
- East Bay/West Gulf Relocation Site
- Existing Site

The No-Action Alternative also was found to fail the above evaluation, but is required by CEQ regulations and by NEPA to be carried forward to the detailed alternatives evaluation to serve as a baseline against which other alternatives are measured. Of the alternatives evaluated, only the West Bay Site was a reasonable and feasible alternative, which would accomplish the purpose and need for the project, as defined by the USACE. **Table S-3** provides a summary of those alternatives reviewed in the USACE's evaluation and whether or not the alternatives meet the evaluation criteria.

<b>Table S-3 USACE Summary of Alternatives Evaluation Based on Purpose and Need Criteria</b>				
<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Meets FAA Safety and Design Standards</b>	<b>Could Operate and Grow to Allow Opportunities for Expansion of Air Transportation Services within the Region Centered on Bay County, Florida</b>	<b>Compatible with Local and Regional Comprehensive Planning Goals of Bay County, Florida</b>	<b>Retained for Further Analysis by the USACE</b>
<b>No-Action *</b>	No	No	No	Yes
Other Modes	Yes	No	No	No
Other Airports	Yes	No	No	No
Tyndall Joint Use	No	No	No	No
Separate Facilities	Yes	No	No	No
West Bay Site	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Callaway Site	Yes	No	No	No
East Bay/West Gulf Site	Yes	No	No	No
Existing Site	Yes	No	No	No

The No-Action Alternative includes no construction at the Existing Site. The No-Action Alternative is carried through the EIS as a basis for comparison with the various alternatives.

Source: USACE, 2005.

**Preferred Alternatives**

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### FAA Preferred Alternative

The FAA is required by regulation to identify the agency's "preferred alternative" in the FEIS. See 40 CFR 1502.14(e) and Paragraph 506e of FAA Order 1050.1E. As defined in CEQ's *Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning NEPA Regulations*, "The 'agency's preferred alternative' is the alternative which the agency believes would fulfill its statutory mission and responsibilities, giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical and other factors." In selecting a preferred alternative, the FAA considered the factors below in the context and scope of implementing federal transportation policies within the framework of the agency's statutory authorities and responsibilities.

The FAA works with airport administrators and state and local officials to address airport development needs in conjunction with local and regional planning processes. In this instance, for example, Section 2.4.4 outlines comprehensive local efforts, beginning with Bay County's use of the State of Florida's Optional Sector planning process, to provide long-term growth opportunities that would be compatible with aviation development at the West Bay Site.

In keeping with CEQ's guidance regarding identification of a preferred alternative, and because the FAA does not initiate airport development projects, the FAA's selection of a preferred alternative may, where appropriate, take account of, and accord substantial deference to, the Airport Sponsor's preferences. Consideration of the Airport Sponsor's preferences when evaluating alternatives is appropriate where all alternatives meet the needs of the National Airspace System and there is no clearly superior alternative from an environmental standpoint.

The FAA selects the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative as its preferred alternative. For the reasons presented throughout this FEIS, the FAA has selected this alternative as its preferred alternative because of its superior ability to meet the purposes and needs of the project with fewer constraints than presented by any of the Existing Site alternatives. The FAA has also selected this alternative because the West Bay Site has been deemed the operationally preferable location as compared to the Existing Site.

The FAA has also considered environmental factors in its selection of a preferred alternative. From an environmental standpoint, neither the Existing Site nor the West Bay Site can be deemed clearly superior. Each site presents a different variety and extent of environmental impact, neither of which can be considered clearly more or less severe. The Existing Site alternatives represent greater impacts to surrounding communities, through noise impacts and relocations of residences and businesses. The West Bay Site, by contrast, is currently undeveloped and would have no impacts to community members but would involve wetland and biotic community impacts, as well as new floodplain impacts. In addition to the fundamental difference in the nature of the impacts at the two sites, FAA has also considered other environmental factors. For example, the sites differ in their opportunities for environmental enhancement and preservation<sup>1</sup>, as well as the availability of preventative strategies to reduce or avoid impacts that are unavoidable at the competing location.<sup>2</sup> Because the impacts at the two locations are of fundamentally different varieties and the opportunities for enhancement and/or avoidance of impacts are disparate, the FAA cannot conclude that one site is clearly superior to the other from an environmental standpoint. As a result, FAA may consider the Airport Sponsor's stated goals and objectives when identifying a preferred alternative.

Focusing solely on the alternatives at the West Bay Site, the impacts to wetlands are quantitatively different for the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative and the West Bay Site 6,800-foot Alternative (Scenario 2). However, according to USACE, the Airport Sponsor's proposed mitigation appears to be

<sup>1</sup> For example, the West Bay Site presents an opportunity to protect the mitigation areas within the WBCA from development and to enhance these areas, a benefit that would not exist if an Existing Site alternative were pursued.

<sup>2</sup> For example, there is limited water treatment available at the Existing Site to treat runoff from PFN. However, the West Bay Site alternatives provide an opportunity for expansion of airport facilities, as demand warrants, and provides sufficient area for stormwater management that is not accommodated at the Existing Site. Similarly, although there will be a significant floodplain encroachment under the West Bay Site alternatives, the Existing Site alternatives occur in an already impacted historic floodplain, as evidenced by past development in the floodplain and previous inundation of the airfield at PFN. Development of the airport at the West Bay Site presents an opportunity to plan the development to avoid inundation risks from coastal flooding during storm surge that are unavoidable at the current location.

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sufficient to offset the impacts associated with the ultimate buildout. With respect to floodplain impacts, there is only a slight difference in total acres of impact, and although both alternatives are considered a significant encroachment into the floodplain, these impacts are adequately mitigated by the Airport Sponsor's proposed mitigation plan. As a result, FAA concludes that all of the alternatives at the West Bay Site are functionally equivalent from an environmental standpoint.

Because development at the West Bay Site would meet the needs of the national airspace system, meet the FAA's environmental responsibilities, and address the Airport Sponsor's goals, and because neither the Existing Site nor the West Bay Site is clearly superior from an environmental perspective, the FAA concludes that development at the West Bay Site is preferred over expansion at the Existing Site. Because of the similarity in environmental impacts when considering the three West Bay Site alternatives, the FAA has considered the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative's superior ability to satisfy the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives in making its selection. Therefore, the FAA has selected the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative (Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project) as its preferred alternative.

**Hodges FEIS Comment: The FAA has not presented reasons throughout this FEIS that support the selection of the Sponsor's proposed project as the FAA's preferred alternative. FAA has allowed one improper alternative to influence the analysis, and has excluded one or more superior alternatives that should be analyzed. I request that the alternatives be revised and a Supplemental EIS be conducted.**

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**A Supplemental EIS is also required to fully assess the connected action of redeveloping the existing airport site if the FAA's preferred alternative is built. The Sponsor and FAA have inextricably connected redevelopment to the Sponsor's project by undertaking to monetize the existing site prior to building and opening a replacement.**

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**A Programmatic EIS is required to fully assess the cumulative actions triggered by this federal action over the broad area of the Optional Sector Plan. This sector plan was developed in a process that did not allow the plan without an embedded airport, therefore the airport and the Sector Plan are part and parcel and require a Programmatic EIS.**

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**(End of Hodges comments on FEIS Executive Summary)**

Applicant's Preferred Alternative for USACE Permit Application

The only alternative that would accomplish the purpose and need for the project, as defined by the USACE, and thus would be a reasonable alternative, was the West Bay Site 8400-foot Alternative (Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project). As detailed in Section 3.13.3, ultimate development at the West Bay Site is the applicant's preferred alternative for purposes of the USACE permit application. Implementation of the applicant's preferred alternative would directly impact 1,513 acres of jurisdictional wetlands and 17 acres of non-jurisdictional wetlands of the 1,936 acres of jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional wetlands on the 4,037-acre airport relocation site within a 50-year period for a conceptual, multi-phased airport facility. The USACE has disclosed and is evaluating in general terms the ultimate proposed project within the framework of a proposed conceptual permit, which would cover a 50-year period, if issued. Only the initial Phase I (i.e., through the year 2018) portion of the project has been provided in sufficient detail for USACE to evaluate for authorization for construction under the proposed conceptual permit. The USACE would evaluate in detail, future individual construction phases, as they

3-1-1 Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2 are suggestions to correct the EMAS designs that were compromised by choosing to fill Goose Bayou, an approach that was known to be unlawful in advance.

**Response** Alternatives to the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project were developed prior to receipt of the October 2003 and February 2004 FDEP letters regarding alternatives with impacts to Goose Bayou. The alternatives in Exhibit 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS in Chapter 3.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Filling Goose Bayou was ruled out in 1998 by overwhelming negative response from both agencies and the public, and the documentation for this ruling was readily available to FAA before the 10/2003 and 2/2004 letters from FDEP. This single factor has been cited as the primary reason that the Sponsor undertook "relocation", which led to the proposed project. The EMAS alternatives still do not take advantage of design features that would minimize intrusion into the community, such as offset localizer and full use of the land existing westward of the runway (approx 120 feet rather than 59 feet), but at least FAA has contradicted the Sponsor's assertion that EMAS is not applicable at PFN. 25

1-5-2 To summarize these detailed comments, FAA has accepted unsubstantiated forecasts and arguments about purpose and need.

**Response** The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for the Panama City Bay-County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA also decided to use the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are dependent upon aircraft passenger and operations levels (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality, and surface transportation) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** By lending credibility to the Sponsor's flawed forecast for any purpose, FAA has erred by developing 8400-foot on-site alternatives that are not "feasible", "reasonable" or "prudent", but nevertheless weigh heavily against the existing site in tradeoff analysis. For the purpose of this EIS, FAA should limit all alternatives to its own determination of 6800 feet of primary runway. What would FAA do if the Sponsor proposed 13,500 feet? Any length over 6800 feet cannot pass FAA's own expert screening for justification of federal funding and thus the "federal action". The Sponsor has presented several desires, but no credible purpose or need. 26

3-2-3 FAA has inappropriately designed and evaluated runway alternatives.

**Response** Runways alternatives were appropriately designed based on FAA design criteria and public comments.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** By proposing alternatives that cannot possibly be built, FAA has not developed only "Feasible", "reasonable", or "prudent" alternatives. The EIS should be confined to alternatives that can be realized, not merely designed to FAA criteria. 27

3-3-4 FAA has created inappropriate and subjective criteria for evaluating various airspace configurations.

Response Criteria were developed by the FAA to provide an objective basis to compare alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** For such a crucial decision as decommissioning an airport from the national aviation system, the criteria should be documented and generally applicable. In this case, FAA has extrapolated from one local base commander's comments a whole new rule: "Compatibility with airspace configuration and utilization". This new rule has no dimensional, procedural, traffic-based, or separation-based criteria that define pass/fail! Then, FAA has misapplied the new rule in its "Level One" screening by finding that the "No-Action" alternative PASSES Level One screening for this rule and the "Separate Facilities" alternative FAILS even though the "No-Action" alternative would concentrate all future traffic in closer proximity to Tyndall AFB and its SUA's, whereas the "Separate Facilities" alternative would disperse traffic over a larger area. This new rule apparently only applies to Bay County, since FAA (using the same consultant) found no "compatibility" problem with allowing 240+ operations per hour at ATL on 5 runways within 2 miles embedded in a region with several civil and military airports in close proximity. This distortion of trivial airspace management issues is an arbitrary and capricious decision that eliminates the most logical and economical solution to the Sponsor's perceived purpose and need. Instead of twisting the facts this way, FAA should be encouraging a solution that expands the national aviation system and minimizes environmental impact at both the existing and the remote site. We see the existing site becoming an ordinary and intensive mixed-use development instead of a unique aviation asset that is relatively benign in environmental impact, while the remote site has twice as much impact (and consequent mitigation) as necessary.

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5-5-5 The EIS must be strictly impartial in these matters and not contain any unsubstantiated claims of technical, environmental, or economic benefits to be expected.

Response The FAA believes that it has effectively and objectively considered and presented the impacts of the Sponsor's proposed project and alternatives in the FEIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** From the Executive Summary: "From an environmental standpoint, neither the Existing Site nor the West Bay Site can be deemed clearly superior." This statement alone distills the bias FAA has demonstrated. By essentially ignoring the vast impact of the West Bay alternative while turning a blind eye to the actual impact of decommissioning PFN and building a whole new urban center on the site, FAA loses its claim to objectivity. If the airport could actually be "relocated", the preferred alternative might have merit; in fact, the airport is destroyed, a whole new development follows as a direct consequence, and a new airport is built on an environmentally disastrous site, **all for the vast benefits of 2100 additional feet of runway. What a waste after \$6 Million and four years of "analysis"**.

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2-1-6 This project (the Sponsor's preferred alternative, not the DEIS) has been consistently "oversold" to the public as to its necessity, prospects for improved air service, and particularly the urgency to build it within the 20-year planning period. The Florida legislature and the state agencies involved have been demonstrably biased toward the proposal, expediting planning, funding and permitting processes, and lately creating a new funding vehicle called the "Strategic Intermodal System". Without the intense lobbying of the landowner and other financially interested parties, the Sponsor's project would be far down any list of federal or state infrastructure priorities.

**Response** Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The purpose of this comment is to address FAA's insistence that FAA does not propose airport projects, it just reacts to requests. In fact, such requests would be vastly reduced if the "Sponsors" were not heavily subsidized and encouraged to propose ever-larger facilities with little regard to justification. This Sponsor could not even afford to design the project without FAA and FDOT – it is disingenuous to say that the Sponsor is an independent entity in this undertaking.

30

5-5-7 A copy of FAA's CONDITIONAL letter of concurrence with the "Feasibility Study 2000", dated August 18, 2000 is enclosed. In the four-plus years since that letter, the sponsor has revealed absolutely nothing publicly of its response, if any, to FAA's comments.

**Response** The referenced August 18, 2000 letter is not a condition letter of concurrence. The letter concurs in proceeding with the site selection study.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** We are splitting hairs here – the FAA made several penetrating comments that go to the heart of justifying this project, and the Sponsor now admits the comments were discussed verbally but no record of disposition was made. So now we are six years and \$36 Million later, the questions are more relevant than ever, and no answers are in the record. Who is accountable?

31

5-5-8 It is especially disturbing that the Sponsor was also silent during an anonymously-funded media campaign in 2003 supporting the relocation by asserting that PFN faced mandatory compliance with current RSA design standards. The FAA letter directly contradicts that claim, and raises several legitimate questions that others have also raised. These questions have been assiduously avoided by the Sponsor. If FAA wonders why this project lost the referendum 55-45, it is largely because of this evasion of any negative aspect of this "field of dreams".

**Response** This is a local issue outside the purview of the FAA and the scope of this EIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** RSA determinations are not a local issue. Why is it outside the purview of FAA when a Sponsor propagates information directly contradictory to FAA policy after being told in writing how to handle RSA assumptions for the project?

32

1-5-9 None of the passenger traffic or financial forecasts of the "Feasibility Study -2000" have been fulfilled, yet FAA and the Florida legislature continue to expedite this project without exercising any oversight over the Sponsor or its consultants.

**Response** Preparation of this EIS by FAA is being conducted in accordance with federal, not state, law. The FAA, as the lead agency, directly oversees the management of the project consultants as well as the preparation of the EIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** So the standard now is "It only has to be legal." This is a low bar for administering multimillion-dollar expenditures. As for EIS preparation, it appears that FAA has allowed the consultant to work for months on additional tasks without funding or a change order, in order to expedite the EIS.

33

5-5-10 ETP is supposedly an arms-length negotiation of environmental mitigation, including concession of land or land entitlements, by St. Joe to benefit the Sponsor and the federal action that is the subject of this DEIS. Such conflicting participation violates the principle and perhaps the letter of FAA's policy that prohibits consultants with a financial interest in the outcome to develop Environmental Impact Statements for FAA actions. The ETP process is apparently integral to selection of a preferred alternative and the FAA Record of Decision.

**Response** The Ecosystem Team Permitting (ETP) process is conducted by the State and is separate from Federal activities.

5-5-11 Also enclosed is Page 3 of the contract between Bechtel Infrastructure Inc. and the Sponsor, wherein the consultant is eligible for ever-expanding "continuing services" with the provision that if a final design or construction contract is forthcoming, the consultant is favored to receive "project management, design/build or other contract" work as well. We are well past the usual five-year limit for adding tasks to a professional services agreement according to FAA Advisory Circular 150/5100-14e and \$28 Million has been spent on a nominal \$200 Million project without undertaking any detail design.

**Response** Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response (5-5-10 and 5-5-11):** The Sponsor's mitigation plan that is vital to the EIS was developed by the ETP process. The same prime consultant has billed almost \$30 Million to the Sponsor and presently estimates \$30 Million more if the project is approved. FAA would have been better served to require total independence from this consultant for all work affecting the Record of Decision. Has FAA concurred in writing with the open-ended engagement?

34

4-20-12 Regarding the Sector Plan and the related "Detailed Specific Area Plans" (DSAP's), a close reading reveals that the DSAP's are actually, "Vague Non-Specific Area Plans", having no dimensioned maps or drawings delineating the planned land uses, and having no binding written agreement to convey the "West Bay Preservation Area", particularly the buffers to the shore of West Bay and the riparian buffers along the streams and creeks. This "Preservation Area" is apparently to be achieved by selling it to the State of Florida, but no funding or other mechanism for achieving the plan are disclosed. This plan, if implemented, creates a predictable, if uncertain, financial cost and environmental impact and or mitigation that is triggered only by the Sponsor's preferred alternative. These impacts should be explained and quantified before a final EIS.

**Response** The FEIS identifies Sponsor commitments in Chapter 5 and in Appendix R.



5-5-13 The NEPA process is one of the few opportunities for patient, objective, and long-term evaluation of such a significant project. FAA should strive for the utmost objectivity and attention to its legal responsibilities under NEPA. In view of the many deficiencies in methodology and information available to the public in the subject DEIS, I request that a Supplemental DEIS, including public hearing and comment, be prepared. I also request a copy of any Supplemental DEIS, the final EIS, and the FAA Record of Decision.

**Response** Circumstances do not warrant the preparation of a supplemental EIS because there has not been a significant change in the scope of the proposed project or in environmental impacts or conditions that paints a dramatically different picture from the DEIS. The FEIS and ROD will be available for public review at the Panama City/Bay County International Airport, USACE Panama City Regulatory Office, Bay County Public Library, FAA Orlando Airports District Office, and Panama City/Bay County International Airport's website at [www.pciairport.com](http://www.pciairport.com).

**Hodges FEIS Response (4-20-12 and 5-5-13):** These comments go beyond the narrow mitigation plan for the direct federal action. The West Bay DSAP (and subsequent DSAPs authorized by the Sector Plan) are cumulative impacts that should be fully addressed in a Supplemental or Programmatic EIS, since they were not included in this EIS. This induced growth is embodied in the Sponsor's purpose and need. Detailed land uses and population/employment have been projected for the West Bay DSAP and the RiverCamp development, and such projections can be extrapolated for the entire 75,000-acre Sector Plan. Again, there is no assurance that preservation or mitigation will be adequate unless the impacts are fully understood. I once again request a Supplemental EIS to address both the impact of the greater Sector Plan area and the intensive redevelopment of the existing site.

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**1-5-14** The Sponsor has not provided any data to show that the existing PFN airport is insufficient for aviation needs during the planning period (20 years). Passenger forecasts used in the Feasibility Study (2000) have not been met, and new forecasts have been developed that are even more unrealistic.

**Response** The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for the Panama City Bay-County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA also decided to use the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are dependent upon aircraft passenger and operations levels (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality, and surface transportation) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives. Despite fluctuations in actual versus forecast activity, the FAA believes that the TAF remains a valid forecast for the basis of this EIS and that the Airport Sponsor's forecast provides the basis for assessing the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The TAF continues to over-estimate PFN traffic, although not as egregiously as the Sponsor's forecasts. Neither forecast supports a need for a new airport because simple restoration of previous airline flight activity using 50- to 90-seat regional aircraft will fulfill the TAF through at least 2030. ] 36

**4-20-15** The Sponsor and FAA are trying to have a project both ways, minimizing the scope and resulting mitigation while preserving the right to expand the project to a scale that clearly cannot be mitigated with the proposed mitigation plan. If this initial phase is developed, the project is PERMANENT and all of its potential impact should be mitigated, or binding commitments should be made for all future mitigation. Alternatively, the project can be permanently limited by approving a reduced-scope Airport Layout Plan with no provisions for expansion.

**Response** Please refer to the response to comment 4-20-12 above.

**3-1-16** Regardless of the decision on the new facilities, FAA should NOT support decommissioning PFN. Airspace considerations are the only reason given in the DEIS for rejecting a two-airport plan. The airspace configuration of a two-airport plan is well within the capability of both en route and local air traffic control, as demonstrated by numerous similar configurations both nationally and nearby (example: VPS/Destin/Sikes/Hurlbut/Duke).

**Response** The reader is directed to Appendix D to the complete correspondence from Brigadier General Larry D. New, Commander of the 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing to Mr. Randy Curtis. This correspondence in part states: "While the two airports have adjusted to these issues and work them safely on a daily basis, it is not a desirable situation to have commercial aircraft and high performance fighter aircraft in this close proximity."

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Until the 2-airport alternative is actually designed (including procedures) it is not clear that any configuration is superior in objective terms. General New's letter has been given far more consideration than the official comments on the DEIS of General Egginton. Gen. Egginton is neutral about the decision on a new airport, as long as the Tyndall SUA's and nav aids are maintained. None of the alternatives impinge on SUA's and nobody has defined what a "potential conflict" is. When General New is asked to make an observation, his vague concern is used to reconfigure the entire regional airspace. This is all to accommodate restoring flight activity to previous levels, since growth is still well below historical levels for both military and civil traffic. This is a classic "tempest in a teapot". ] 37

**3-1-17** If this decommissioning is allowed, Panama City will be the largest community in Florida without a paved local general aviation airport. Every other community has either a combination local GA/Air Carrier airport (PNS, TLH) or a local GA/separate Air Carrier airport (FMY/RSW, Whitted/TPA, Orlando Executive/MCO). If PFN is decommissioned, the replacement airport will be the most remote community airport in Florida, over 20 miles from most users. The replacement airport offers only one new capability: a 2100 foot longer main runway. Every other component is the same or inferior (examples: no 90-degree crosswind runway, 100-foot wide crosswind runway vs. 150-foot wide at PFN, impaired low-altitude radar coverage).

**Response** Comment noted.

**3-1-18** The only plan with significant expansion of CAPACITY is the two-airport plan. The two-airport plan also mitigates the (future) need to expand the new airport with a parallel runway, and the two-airport plan precludes any environmental impact from redevelopment of the existing site. A new airport under the 2-airport plan would only have one runway, again mitigating impacts and reducing the cost.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed project is not based on the need to provide additional capacity for the Panama City-Bay County region.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Sponsor's project is a 2100-foot runway extension and a land rush for developers at a public cost of at least \$400 Million, plus marking up the price of all the user facilities.

38

**3-1-19** The Sponsor has dismissed the two-airport plan for two purported reasons: 1) The GA-only PFN would not be economically viable and 2) the Sponsor wants (not needs) to sell the existing site as seed money for the replacement. The Sponsor has not done a detailed financial analysis of a GA airport, apparently because there is no real interest by the Sponsor in a GA airport. Nearby Okaloosa County operates three facilities: the VPS joint-use air carrier terminal, the Destin GA airport, and the Sikes GA airport. Clearly, a GA airport in Panama City would attract traffic comparable to Destin (60,000 annual operations), so it is not obvious that a GA airport in Panama City would not be viable. The real reason for closing PFN is to sell it for (hopefully) \$38-40M net proceeds. The Sponsor does not need these proceeds to finance the new airport—its consultants have revised the projected state/federal funds by \$40 Million at will, so it is clear that another \$40M in grants could be raised. The value of the donated land and the capital surplus of the Sponsor are sufficient for the “local share” if the construction estimates are valid. If not, then the project can be deferred until a remote air carrier airport is truly feasible and justified, rather than cannibalizing a local asset to subsidize an otherwise unfeasible project.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor has confirmed that the proceeds from sale of the existing site are still required to supplement FAA and FDOT funds for construction of the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The proposed project cannot be scaled back enough to be financially feasible without proceeds from sale of the existing site.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** We will never know if the project could have been built with grant funds – the Sponsor has squandered so much money accelerating this ill-advised project and complicating it with creative financing that it may not be possible at all. A conventional “pay as you go” approach could have delivered something useful long before it will be needed.

39

**1-5-20** The Sponsor has failed to show that the proposed project is needed to "meet forecast growth in aviation demand in the Panama City-Bay County region". In fact, air carrier operations have declined from over 40 per day in 2001 to 24 per day currently. Restoration of these 16 daily operations by regional jet aircraft of 60-seat average size would provide for 130,000 ADDITIONAL enplanements at 75% load factor, more than required to meet the 2020 forecast. In fact, the airport has approximately 300 operations per day of unused capacity, representing FIFTEEN TIMES the current air carrier capacity need without even considering larger aircraft.

**Response** The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for Panama City-Bay County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA also decided to use the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are dependent upon aircraft operations (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality, surface transportation) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives. Aviation demand forecasts are developed to represent overall trends in aviation activity – passenger and cargo enplanements and aircraft operations. Activity during a particular year may be above or below the forecast activity, based on specific short-term occurrences, such as the loss of service by a particular carrier. A review of the 2003 TAF indicates that 181,414 passenger enplanements were projected for 2004. According to the information provided by the Airport Sponsor, 195,688 passengers boarded an aircraft at the existing Airport in 2004, just under 8 percent higher than forecast. Also, the 2003 TAF indicates that 81,710 aircraft operations were projected for 2004, whereas the Airport Sponsor has reported 91,679 operations in 2004 – or 12 percent higher than projected. Despite these fluctuations in actual versus forecast activity, the FAA believes that the TAF remains a valid forecast for the basis of this EIS and that the Sponsor's forecast provides the basis for assessing the full range of potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Let us consider the the 2003 TAF (Vol. I, p. 1-14) – the forecast predicts 263,406 enplanements in 2018. If the service is entirely on 60-seat regional jets with 75% load factor, ONLY 16 DEPARTURES PER DAY ARE REQUIRED. If the TAF is the "valid forecast" then this EIS should conclude there is no "purpose and need" for a new airport. Indeed, if we allow the Sponsor's forecast except for the charter fiction, we have 393,000 enplaned – 24 DEPARTURES (OR LESS IF A FEW MAINLINE DEPARTURES ARE INCLUDED). This barely matches previous flight activity and does not require mainline service up to 24 departures per day. Still no "purpose and need"!

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**2-1-21** It is very clear that the Sponsor's project is NOT required for aviation, and is motivated much more by real estate development objectives, both at the new site and at the present site. FAA has no mandate to subsidize real estate or economic development, for reasons outlined in FAA's own guidance on benefit/cost analysis.

**Response** The potential for real estate and economic development is a local issue and is outside of the scope of the federal EIS process and the regulatory responsibility of the FAA.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The development of an airport is much more concerned with flight activity than with passenger traffic, especially when passenger traffic is so low as to fit in 12 to 20 departures of regional and narrow-body aircraft for decades to come. The Sponsor claims no capacity benefits because it is simply impossible to stretch the facts to include a capacity need. It would be great if the forecasts could agree, but even the Sponsor's optimistic forecast fits well under this scenario, until it enters the fiction of daily widebody charters. The benefits are simply not worth either the financial or the environmental costs.

41

**2-1-22** The FAA should limit this DEIS to alternatives that are clearly comparable and required by the national aviation system. The "on-site" 8400 foot runway alternatives are not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practical" as required by NEPA, and considering them distorts the analysis to favor the Sponsor's preferred alternative. If the Sponsor will only undertake the preferred alternative, the project should be deferred until an 8400 foot runway is shown to be required by growth in aviation demand.

**Response** The 8,400' runway is analyzed in the EIS because it is the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The 6,800' runway length is also analyzed in the EIS, including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed in the commenter's Exhibits 1 and 2.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The 8400-foot runway on the existing site is not the Sponsor's project, but allowing it into the analysis distorts the tradeoff favoring an unnecessary 8400-foot runway. The only "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practical" 8400-foot alternatives would be at sites away from both West Bay (or other wetland-intensive sites) and the existing site. FAA has not proposed any valid 8400-foot alternatives to West Bay.

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- 5-5-23 See detailed comments embedded in Chapter One.
- Response** See responses to Chapter 1 detailed comments.
- 5-5-24 See detailed comments embedded in Chapter Two
- Response** See responses to Chapter 2 detailed comments.
- 5-5-25 See detailed comments embedded in Chapter Three.
- Response** See responses to Chapter 3 detailed comments.
- 5-5-26 See detailed comments embedded in Chapter Three regarding carrying additional alternatives into detailed analysis.
- Response** See responses to Chapter 3 detailed comments.
- 
- 1-5-27 Airline representatives have recognized that customers will travel more than two hours by car to take advantage of low-cost carrier service, often by-passing another airport within closer proximity to them. The service area for PFN currently extends over many counties and would likely expand further with more competitive fares.
- The commercial-service airports serving the northwest Florida region, including PNS, VPS, DHN, PFN, and TLH, served approximately 3 million enplaning passengers in 2002. Using conservative FAA projections, this number could exceed 3.5 million annual enplanements by 2008 when the new airport is projected to open for service.”
- The implication is that 3.5 million enplanements will be available to “new PFN” in 2008. Taken to its logical conclusion, this is true IF PNS (100 miles away), VPS (65 miles away) DHN (100 miles away), and TLH (100 miles away) ALL close or lose 100% of their traffic. This quote is typical of the hyperbole used to further the project.
- Response** Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Sponsor's airport, wherever it is, will never capture much traffic from adjacent market areas.

43

- 1-5-28 The FAA has rightly declined to endorse the Sponsor's updated forecast, and the Updated Forecast should NOT be allowed to influence either this DEIS or the future benefit/cost study. I have obtained the Updated Forecast, and I am attaching it with detailed comments embedded. In brief, the Updated Forecast does not foresee any service that cannot be flown from the “No Action” alternative, except for some purely speculative international charters in 2018 created out of thin air to meet the 500-operation threshold for an 8400 ft runway. The Sponsor has not met its earlier forecasts, much less any updates. FAA must use a consistent forecast in cost justifications and fund allocations, or else airport sponsors nationwide will start gaming the forecasts to the detriment of the whole planning regime.

**Response** The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for the Panama City Bay-County International Airport as the basis for *justification and analysis in this EIS*. The FAA also decided to use the *Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are dependent upon aircraft passenger and operations levels (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality, and surface transportation) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.*

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Redundant response noted.

44

2-2-30 This paragraph typifies the weak justification of the project. "Reducing the potential for increases in airspace conflicts" - what does this mean? The airspace system is designed and operated to well-defined criteria, none of which is stressed or even exercised much by the current configuration. "Reducing potential" should not be recognized as a pass/fail criterion for the project.

Response This factor is based on purpose and need as identified by the Airport Sponsor.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Sponsor has not identified a purpose or need with this jargon - it has no meaning. ] 45

2-2-31 "Providing compatible land use surrounding the airport site" - for the FAA, land use compatibility is largely a noise issue. The last Part 150 noise study for PFN, done in the 1980's, correctly predicted that noise impact would be less now than it was then, and would be nominal for many years into the future. The noise simulations done for this DEIS confirm these findings. Noise issues should not be used to justify the project.

Response This factor is based on purpose and need as identified by the Airport Sponsor.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Another "purpose and need" which is neither. Both sites are compatible, largely because the airport is so under-utilized. ] 46

2-2-32 "Providing areas for airport facilities and for compatible industrial development" - the Sponsor has not shown sufficient need for additional airport facilities, and industrial development is speculative - there is no pent-up demand for industrial land in the region, and the county comprehensive plan requires a bona fide need before zoning for industry.

Response Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Non-response noted. ] 47

2-2-33 "Locating SR 390 so that the Runway Safety Area on the southeast end of Runway 14-32 meets FAA standards and providing uncongested surface transportation access to the airport" - these objectives do not require relocation of the airport. FDOT has a major project to rebuild SR390 over the next several years, and realignment to modestly extend the runway and correct deficiencies could be incorporated.

Response The issue of the location of SR 390 was identified by the Airport Sponsor as a purpose of the Airport Sponsor's proposed project.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Another spurious need, not supported, just "identified". ] 48

2-2-34 "Avoiding impacts to the waters of Goose Bayou, associated streams, and other jurisdictional wetland areas; and avoid impacts from storm surge and to the 100-year floodplain." - no significant impacts to Goose Bayou, tributaries, wetlands, or the 100-year FP are necessary if a prudent onsite alternative is selected. Where is the concern for avoiding devastation of thousands of acres of wetlands, associated streams, and the waters of Crooked Creek, Burnt Mill Creek, and West Bay?

**Response** The issue of avoiding impacts to waters of Goose Bayou was identified by the Airport Sponsor as a purpose of the Airport Sponsor's proposed project.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Sponsor now proposes to fill this need by assisting a developer to dredge Goose Bayou – and FAA does not see this as a part of the project even though the project cannot happen without it. ] 49

2-2-35 "Prepare for Future Opportunities for Accommodating Projected Demand and Expansion Opportunities" – more undefined and unsupported objectives. The initial airport described would be indicated for passenger traffic no less than double the current PFN traffic (25-30 years from now?), and need for the ultimate 3-runway airport simply cannot be foreseen. Every airport would desire to be "unconstrained", but the financial and environmental cost usually precludes it. This project virtually ignores the basic capabilities of the existing facility, and by closing it concurrently with opening a new airport, avoids justifying the cost of the new airport by its INCREMENTAL value, which is much smaller than the total value.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed project is not based on increasing capacity.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Redundant response noted. The proposed project is based on "... Future Opportunities for Accommodating Projected DEMAND" - is not "accommodating demand" another way of saying "increasing capacity"? I agree that there is no need to increase capacity, but the Sponsor insists on considering events so far in the future that they are meaningless. ] 50

2-2-36 This is a circular argument. The Sector Plan was limited to only plans "driven" by a new airport, and the DSAPs for the airport and most of the acreage are null and void if an airport is not built. Thus, a comprehensive plan that requires an airport – and an airport plan that "responds" to the comprehensive plan.

The Sector Plan is not a "vision" to be fulfilled. It is a creature of the landowner, who has reserved both the right to revoke it if no airport is built, and to retain the waterfront and riparian "preservation" lands if not purchased at an appraised value, even if the airport is built.

**Response** Comment noted.

2-3-37 There is NO federal purpose and need for a new or expanded airport WITHIN THE 20 YEAR PLANNING PERIOD. The current airport meets all criteria except perhaps 3) "flexible/expandable", and the proposed airport fails criteria 1) "located at optimum sites" and 9) "...access to air transportation, ... with typical travel distances of 20 miles or less...".

**Response** See responses to detailed comments on Section 2.5 (comments 162-166).



**3-2-38** Two alternatives rejected in Level One deserve further analysis:

**Tyndall Joint Use** – there is no record of a request to USAF or DoD for joint use. Discussions with the local command do not suffice to eliminate this alternative, given the trivial number of civil operations needed to meet the demand. (Eglin AFB allows 84 civil operations per day, up from 60 per day in the previous lease. If Tyndall AFB allowed 60 or more operations per day, it would serve Bay County far into the future).

**Separate Facilities** – the only reason given for rejecting separate facilities is airspace compatibility. Numerous examples of similar airspace configurations can be cited, and no detailed analysis has been done to show that the proposed configuration presents any unique or unusual problems, or that any regulations require closure of PFEN to accommodate Tyndall AFB and/or “new PFEN”.

**Response** See responses to detailed comments on Chapter 3.

**3-2-39** FAA has not found a need for runway length over 6800 feet, therefore all alternatives should be limited to 6800 feet. The community impact of on-site extension to 8400 feet is also prohibitive and cannot be considered viable.

**Response** The 8,400-foot runway is analyzed in the EIS because it is the Airport Sponsor’s proposed project. The 6,800-foot runway length is also analyzed in the EIS, including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed in the commenter’s Exhibits 1 and 2.

**3-2-40** The alternatives using declared distances and/or EMAS were improperly designed, because the designers knew in advance that filling Goose Bayou is unlawful. A design blending these options and eliminating impact on Goose Bayou is attached as Exhibit 1. Another blended design using a pier structure extending NW is attached as Exhibit 2. These blended designs should be reconsidered using Level Two criteria and carried forward for additional study. The environmental impacts of Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2 should compare favorably with on-site 6800 foot extension, and approach the impacts of the No-Action alternative.

**Response** As indicated in the FEIS, it was determined that any impacts to seagrasses and sovereign submerged land would be eliminated from further consideration based on discussions with the FDEP, NMFS, and the USACE and written correspondence from FDEP received in October 2003 and February 2004. These letters are included in Appendix D. The alternatives included on Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response: Redundant.** ] 51

**Hodges FEIS Response:** There is plentiful documentation pre-dating the DEIS that Goose Bayou should not be filled. This rule should be applied to redevelopment as strenuously as it has been for airport expansion. Strangely, when the Sponsor's audience is developer/purchasers, the rules are different from those in use by FAA and FDOT for airport expansion. ] 52

3-2-41 The real problem is not how to fix the existing airport, it is that the new airport costs too much in environmental impact and simple financial cost for the modest incremental benefits to aviation. The Sponsor is fronting for a real estate developer, instead of hunting a suitable site, in or out of Bay County, to build a new airport someday when it is needed. (this is what the local environmentalists thought they were getting when they tacitly agreed to support relocation instead of expansion). Numerous environmentally benign sites could be developed along I-10, perhaps closer to US Hwy 231 that provides surface access to the region from the north.

**Response** The potential for real estate and economic development is a local issue and is outside of the scope of the federal EIS process and the regulatory responsibility of the FAA.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Please then answer why the FAA is involved in approving a "Land Donation Agreement" that involves real estate considerations beyond aviation needs, and a "Request for Proposals" that allows the Sponsor to collateralize the purchase proceeds of the existing airport before it is decommissioned? Both of these transactions are quite irregular.

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2-5-42 As FAA says in the DEIS, it is not FAA practice to shorten runways in order to establish RSA's, and FAA will have HUGE problems if they start doing it (LaGuardia, Midway, Burbank plus hundreds more)

**Response** Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Comment noted? This "purpose and need" is a cornerstone of the Sponsor's project. The FAA should either provide a program that addresses this need nationally or shut down this Sponsor's insistence that it must do something no other airport is required to do.

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2-1-43 The facilities at the proposed airport site do not replace "in kind" the existing facilities. The crosswind runway is not oriented 90 degrees from the main runway, and the crosswind runway is only 100 feet wide vs. 150 feet wide at the existing facility. The new facility will have only one additional capability, a longer main runway. In every other material respect, the existing facility either has or can be readily improved to the same or better capability than the proposed facility.

**Response** The proposed runway alignments were developed on the basis of maximizing wind coverage and minimizing potential effects on nearby military airspace. FAA does not require that a crosswind runway be oriented at exactly 90 degrees from the primary runway(s).

**Hodges FEIS Response:** If the crosswind alignment is to accommodate Eglin airspace, how is the new airport "reducing the potential conflicts" so important to the FAA? The Sponsor is now considering eliminating the crosswind runway completely – so much for "relocation" - now we are talking about "substitution" of an inferior airport.

} 55

2-1-44 It has been reported that the proposed location is in an area where the Tyndall AFB RAPCON radar cannot reliably vector or observe aircraft below 2000 feet in altitude. Pilots who transit the proposed site frequently report that ground fog and convective thunderstorms occur much more often than at the existing facility. These phenomena, if confirmed, add risks to aviation that should be considered.

**Response** There have been no indications in meetings or written correspondence from Tyndall RAPCON of a radar coverage problem at the proposed site. Coordination has taken place between NOAA and the Airport Sponsor and there are no indications to support the commenter's assertion regarding weather conditions. The facility would be designed to meet FAA guidance for safely accommodating air traffic considering ambient weather conditions.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** When a comment raises a question requiring an answer, the consultant should seek the answer. I have discussed this issue with Tyndall RAPCON, and they are aware that their radar has line-of-sight limitations at West Bay. There is probably a solution for this, but the solution is not to ignore it. Please investigate. ] 56

1-5-45 Neither the FAA Terminal Area Forecast nor the analysis in this DEIS indicates that a runway longer than 6800 feet is required for "aviation growth in the Panama City vicinity", and "the Airport Sponsor's long-term needs" is an undefined term. If the Sponsor's questionable forecast, presumably optimistic, is examined closely, it does not even show a need for 6800 feet.

**Response** Refer to Section 2.5.2, Paragraph 5.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Redundant. ] 57

5-5-46 The entire project has been framed in subjective terms instead of rigorous analysis and justification. The proposed project has INCREMENTALLY more value than the existing facility. If that value is more than the \$250 - \$400M INCREMENTAL cost, then the project should be considered. If not, then other benefits should be identified before proceeding. If the net benefits do not support expenditure of federal funds during the planning period, the project should be deferred, a long-range plan developed (perhaps including land acquisition), and the present airport maintained indefinitely. Given an active plan, a new carrier airport can be built over any 3- to 5-year period, in response to any "surge" in demand. This is exactly what happened at Ft Myers in the 1970's.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor is preparing a Benefit-Cost Analysis, which is required for FAA to make funding decisions.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I have seen the draft of the BCA, and it is very creative, as every attempt to justify this project has been. It is very strange that a marginal project like this would be allowed to burn through \$30 Million in fees without a BCA or risk analysis. ] 58

3-2-47 The Feasibility Study done in 2000 did not attempt a rigorous justification. It merely superimposed three increasingly longer runways on the existing constrained site, estimated the cost of these "straw men" (plus the unevaluated 20-year "wish list" of the 1996 Master Plan), and declared that an entire new airport would be the low-cost alternative. Two of the three "alternatives" (8400 ft and 10400 ft) were patently impossible to build in the community setting, and should not be allowed as alternatives. This DEIS revives the 8400 ft on-site alternative and declares it "reasonable and prudent" even though it is neither. In fact, the existing airport, either "as is" or modestly improved, will meet the aviation growth in the region during the planning period.

**Response** The reason an 8,400-foot alternative was analyzed at the Existing Site was to provide impacts to compare with the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project which includes an 8,400-foot runway at the West Bay Site.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Redundant. ] 59

**5-4-48** "Tiering" may meet the letter of the NEPA, but tiering of development in a sensitive site like West Bay creates huge deferred environmental risk. The conversion of a wetland into a modest airport can probably be mitigated to the letter of the law. A longer scientific view would foresee a future (100 years?) when a larger airport and the related development will severely compromise the estuarine and wetland ecology (the product of thousands of years of natural processes). This is the real environmental impact of this action. These future impacts could be avoided by locating the airport farther inland on a true upland site. Deferring the proposed federal action (which is not needed for aviation during the planning period) would allow consideration of more benign alternatives.

**Response** See Section 1.2.2 of the FEIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Non-responsive to the broad issues raised. I again request a Supplemental or Programmatic EIS to address the total impact of this federal action.

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**1-1-49** This same description would apply to most of the commercial service airports in the country.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-1-51** Once again, this description is typical of many commercial service airports, and the airport is serving its users without significant constraints.

**Response** Comment noted.

**5-5-52** The word "exclusion" in the first paragraph should be "excursion".

**Response** The commenter is correct; the text has been revised.

**1-5-50** This narrative omits the operation of mainline jet service in the deregulated environment during 1991-1995. This service was operated with the same category of airplane (737) and service pattern (nearby hubs, Atlanta) as projected by the Sponsor's Updated Forecast. This service was not financially viable because the market was too small and seasonal to support it. No airfield expansion is needed to re-introduce this service. The subsequent service in small turboprops and regional jets increased the air carrier operations, but not enough to approach the airport's capacity. Currently, daily air carrier operations have declined from 40+ in 2001 to 24 in 2005.

**Response** Section 1.3.2 has been revised.

It is not FAA's responsibility to determine financial viability of routes. Market demand was considered.

**2-5-53** The FAA's full position on correcting RSA deficiencies cannot be summarized easily, but this section makes no attempt. 40 percent of runways under the program do not meet the standards, and many of them never will. As stated in this DEIS, it is not FAA's practice to shorten runways in order to enhance RSA's, if shortening would curtail aircraft already using the runway.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-2-54** This paragraph is apparently in error. The airport is currently seeking to stop residential construction on private property in the southwestern corner of this RPZ.

**Response** The text has been revised for clarification.

**1-2-55** The cargo market is so small that no building is needed. If and when needed, there is plenty of land with access to the airfield for a cargo building.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-3-56** By what standard is PFN airspace considered "complex"? The geometries, routes and procedures described above are the routine activities of Air Traffic Control, and more "complex" situations are common in the region and all over the country.

**Response** Complexity is generally defined in terms of traffic volume and traffic mix. The PFN area has traffic mix that covers the entire aircraft performance spectrum from military high performance super sonic aircraft to air carrier turboprop aircraft to general aviation turbojet, turboprop, and piston powered aircraft. Comment is noted that more complex situations exist throughout the country.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** This is absolutely inane. Once again, you have described the normal aviation environment at small non-hub airports. "High performance super sonic (sic) aircraft" do not behave differently from other aircraft in approach corridors or civil controlled airspace. To invoke "complexity" without stating any objective design or operating parameters is simply spouting jargon that has no meaning to certified participants in the aviation system.

} 61

- 1-5-57** The passenger survey in 1999 was a one-week survey taken between Thanksgiving and Christmas, much too limited to draw broad inferences. The overwhelming characteristics of the PFN market are size (SMALL) and SEASONALITY. In order to draw any useful conclusions, a survey should include several samples at different times of the year.
- Response** The use of the data from the surveys was to identify the primary and secondary market areas served by the Airport for the purposes of the forecasts for the EIS. It is not anticipated that the market areas for passengers using the Airport would change significantly over the course of the year.
- 1-5-58** Low-fare service did not just move from VPS to PNS. Low-fare service was offered in 2001-2004 in both PNS and TLH, "bracketing" the PFN/VPS combined areas. Any discussion of low-fare influence MUST consider the influence of TLH service. Low-fare service was discontinued at TLH in September, 2004, and enplanements at PFN rose immediately. (Note: No new airport was required.) If low-fare returns to TLH and VPS (both more likely than PFN because of larger markets, "new PFN" would be "bracketed" again, at a disadvantage to both TLH (because TLH will be relatively closer than before) and VPS (because the higher-fare airport will be one-third of the distance to VPS and there will be little incentive to stop short of VPS).
- See enclosed detailed comments on the Sponsor's Updated Forecast
- Response** The development of forecasts was based on past trends, anticipated population and other socio-economic trends, and to a certain extent, professional judgments regarding the aviation industry. The FEIS includes a discussion of factors that can affect where and how aviation demand is served, particularly in terms of the choice of passengers to use one airport rather than another airport, when more than one airport is within a reasonable driving distance. As part of that discussion, air services at Okaloosa Regional Airport and Pensacola Regional Airport and the potential effects on service and passenger demand at Panama City-Bay County International Airport were presented as examples and not intended to exclude the potential effects of service at Tallahassee Regional Airport. A number of factors, including the presence of other airports in the region, were considered and included in the preparation of forecasts.
- 1-5-59** See enclosed detailed comments on the Sponsor's Updated Forecast, which is flawed by excluding TLH, failure to backtrack to actual historical data, and "cherry-picking" the data to favor "new PFN". In spite of these errors that inflate the traffic at "new PFN", the Updated Forecast only shows a difference of one narrow body mainline jet (737) over the "old PFN" in the future. This is not justification!! In absolute terms, the forecast only shows FIVE 737'S in year 2028.
- Response** The Airport Sponsor's forecasts were not developed or adapted by the FAA, but were used to provide additional information regarding the full range of potential impacts of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** As stated above, the conclusion of all this "analysis" (particularly in the Sponsor's forecast) was flawed. If this project goes forward, the taxpayers will spend \$400 Million to see who is the better forecaster.

62

**1-5-60** See enclosed detailed comments on the Sponsor's Updated Forecast. There is no reason to accept the forecast of transAtlantic charter service of 500 operations per year, all from the UK. The Sponsor should be required to rescind this part of the forecast. In any event, FAA should not accept it for any EIS, benefit/cost or justification analysis.

**Response** See Section 1.7 which describes how forecasts are used. Additionally, a benefit-cost analysis is not part of the EIS scope. It is a separate process to define the funding and not to assess environmental impacts.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See response 5-5-15.**

63

**1-5-61** Enplanements in 2004 were 194,084, increasing 4.1 percent over 2003. Air cargo enplaned was 328 tons in 2004, DOWN 40 percent from 2003.

The "Feasibility Study, 2000" forecasted 217, 247 enplanements for 2005, indicating that the current activity is well below the forecast that found a new airport "feasible". The FS, 2000 also forecasted over 119,000 operations for 2005, whereas the actual 2004 operations were 93,000. US Air Express has withdrawn approximately 3,500 operations for 2005. In summary, none of the forecasts on which the project was launched have been met.

**Response** Updated information regarding aviation activity at PFN has been added to Section 1.7 of the FEIS.

The FAA prepares and updates its TAF on an annual basis to reflect changing conditions and anticipated future conditions. The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for Panama City-Bay County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA also decided to use the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are affected by aircraft operations (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality, surface transportation) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives. Aviation demand forecasts are developed to represent overall trends in aviation activity - passenger and cargo enplanements and aircraft operations. Activity during a particular year may be above or below the forecast activity, based on specific short-term occurrences, such as the loss of service by a particular carrier. A review of the 2003 TAF indicates that 181,414 passenger enplanements were projected for 2004, whereas the information provided by the commenter indicates that there were actually 93,000 operations at the Airport in 2004 - or nearly 14 percent higher than projected. Despite these fluctuations in actual versus forecast activity, the FAA believes that the TAF remains a valid forecast for the basis of this EIS and that the Sponsor's forecast provides the basis for assessing the full range of potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response: I don't have the entire 2005 TAF, but I would be surprised if it shows a decrease in traffic for PFN in 2005-2006, but that is actually happening. Apparently the expectations cannot be lowered enough to capture this poor market of high fuel prices, high fares, and bankrupt airlines. See 1-5-58.**

64

**1-5-62** The current daily air carrier departures is [sic] TWELVE, a 33 percent decline. I would not characterize that as "fairly consistent" or "stable". Enplanements are stable, however, and growing modestly since AirTran vacated T.H. 2005-2010 will be a key period - if truly robust growth (20-25 percent per year) emerges, the project becomes more attractive. If not, a huge waste of money. Let's wait and see the growth before committing the money.

**Response** Updated information regarding aviation activity at PFN has been added to the FEIS.

**1-5-63** General aviation operations ARE growing "robustly" (15% in 2004). Air carrier operations have declined 33 percent in 3 years.

**Response** Please refer to response to comment 1-5-61.

**1-5-64** See enclosed detailed comments on the Sponsor's updated forecast. The forecast of 500 Boeing 767 operations from "new PFN" in 2018 (all from the UK!) is not credible, and should be rejected. The "updated forecast" is so garbled (and in fact disavowed by its authors) that it contains no useful information. If FAA wants to apply some sensitivity factors to adjust the TAF and use them consistently, FAA should commission its own study to develop such factors.

**Response** The FAA prepares and updates its TAF annually to reflect changing conditions and anticipated future conditions. The FAA has used the 2003 IAF for Panama City-Bay County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA has also used the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are affected by aircraft operations (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.

**1-5-65** Only three of the five concepts are feasible: Scenario 1, No Action (6304 ft runway); Scenario 2, 6800 ft runway on present site, and Scenario 5, 8400 ft runway at new site. The reasons for this comment are developed in analysis of the detailed report.

**Response** The FAA has conducted an evaluation of the reasonable range of alternatives to the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. As a result of the evaluation of alternatives, only those alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed project were carried forth in further detail and environmental analysis. The alternatives evaluations process is outlined in Chapter 3.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The FAA's alternatives are neither reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practical to completely analyze this project, for reasons stated repeatedly in these comments. ] 65

**1-5-66** The forecast methodology has not been validated by the backtesting in this report. Furthermore, the authors have disclaimed and qualified the forecast so generally that it is invalid. FAA should revert to the TAF for all future studies including the benefit/cost study.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's forecasts were not developed or adopted by the FAA, but were used to provide additional information regarding the full range of potential impacts of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.



**1-5-67** As noted above, only Scenarios 1, 2, and 5 appear to be feasible. There is no justification in this forecast for even Scenario 2, much less Scenario 5. *IFFAA, Florida legislature, and the Sponsor are determined to build a new airport, the project should be scaled back a single 8,400-10,000 foot runway focused on air carrier and long-range charter, leaving the existing community airport in place to host general aviation. This is the only scenario that grows operational capacity, adds charter and logistics capability, stimulates general aviation, and saves money by eliminating the crosswind runway and most GA facilities at the new airport. This should be done when domestic enplanements approach 500,000 annually, similar to the Ft. Myers airport development.*

**Response** Please see response to comment 1-5-65 above.

1-5-68 Tallahassee had low-fare service in 2001-2004, and certainly affected PFN traffic. Any analysis of leakage and competitive service areas must include TLH's effect on PFN since TLH is adjacent and a much easier drive than PNS. PNS may have similar market characteristics but it is four times as large and relatively remote. The head-to-head competition is or will be VPS-PFN, but the influence of TLH increases when PFN is relocated 20+ miles west of the population available to TLH, and TLH has low-fare service. The markets are PNS (4xPFN), TLH (2.5xPFN), VPS (2xPFN), and PFN. This disparity in market size is the real challenge for PFN, indicating that both TLH and VPS can be expected to attract low-fare service before PFN. Recent road improvements have enhanced south Walton County's access to VPS, further threatening "new PFN".

Response Comment noted.

1-5-69 The forecast and traffic allocation was not validated by backtesting, which failed to account for PFN's low actual traffic. Obviously, other factors not accounted for have generated actual traffic far below the pro forma generated by this methodology.

Response The FAA prepares and updates its TAF on an annual basis to reflect changing conditions and anticipated future conditions.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** this comment was not about the TAF, but the Sponsor's forecast.

66

1-5-70 The actual data and conclusions in the report are contradictory, and the authors have wisely disclaimed any confidence in the forecasts. The summary tables predict only modest mainline domestic service to nearby hubs even in Scenario 5 (1-737 in 2013, not a likely pattern-carriers will upgrade at least 2 flights to start mainline service, 2-737 in 2018, 3+-737 in 2023, and 5+-737 in 2028). THE INCREMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 AND SCENARIO 5 IS ONE MAINLINE 737 DEPARTURE PER DAY!! This forecast certainly does not justify the expense or environmental impact of a new airport, especially since the report acknowledges that all mainline flying can be introduced at the present airport with 6304 ft runway, except the wildly speculative international charters. It is irresponsible to forecast DAILY widebody charters from the UK on an airport while simultaneously forecasting only TWO daily 737's as the largest domestic movements. As for Ft. Myers, the old airport at Ft. Myers (Page Field, almost identical to PFN) carried approximately 500,000 enplanements for several years BEFORE RSW WAS OPENED. Page Field still exists as a local GA airport and is heavily utilized.

Response The comparisons with other locations regarding facility development and the timing of that development can only be made when comparing all of the relevant local factors. The FEIS describes the justification for the new airport and its timing, and describes the reasons that operating a two-airport system would not be favorable for the Panama City-Bay County region.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Non-responsive. Please explain in local terms how a new airport is justified for the incremental differences in traffic between the present airport and ANY of the forecasts. This EIS is apparently written to reach a foregone conclusion, and the authors simply refuse to confront the facts.

67

1-5-71 General Aviation owners and pilots have been surveyed by Friends of PFN, Inc., an ad hoc GA advocacy group, and they found that 90% of those surveyed OPPOSE relocating to new PFN because the location will be the farthest community airport from its local users in the state, and the utility of GA is related to its convenience. This infers that a substantial fraction (up to one-third) of present GA users will not relocate to new PFN. There is no data to back a forecast of 10 percent growth, and the most likely scenario is a sharp decline followed by a 5- to 10-year recovery to present levels. Nobody affiliated with this project recognizes that destroying PFN as seed money for a marginal project is foolhardy. One FBO already needs to build a new GA jet hangar, but his planning is stymied by the uncertainty of amortizing the investment if PFN closes. Thus, the Sponsor is killing real GA growth to pursue an airline-centric project that will inhibit local GA, while being almost irrelevant to the airlines.

A GA-only PFN would likely have traffic comparable to Destin airport, circa 60,000 annual operations. This would certainly be a viable GA airport, not needing a control tower or Part 139 certification, with operation outsourced to FBO's.

Cargo and military activities are modest now and there is no forecast for significant growth to require a larger airport. The entire "Sector Plan" is a real estate enhancement scheme to adorn otherwise nondescript land with an airport at public expense. If this goes forward, the scope should be limited to one long runway. Narratives about a future parallel runway are pure wishful thinking. A much more effective capacity enhancement is keeping PFN in service.

Response The Airport Sponsor has not proposed to maintain PFN as a General Aviation airport.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Sponsor has also not proposed a substitute airport that is justified economically or environmentally. ] 68

1-5-72 The report actually shows that there are NOT "many potential outcomes" in the forecast. In terms of aviation activity, the differences between the "scenarios" are trivial unless one accepts the unlikely forecast of daily international widebody charters in 2018. There is no data to support the charter forecast, only speculation.

Response Comment noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I presume we agree. ] 69

1-5-73 The disclaimer paragraph above renders the entire forecast speculative. Additional errors in assumptions and conclusions will be pointed out below as they appear. The most obvious deficiencies are the omission of any analysis of the TLH market, the failure of the forecast methodology when backtesting to the historical data, "cherry-picking" the data to improve the outcome for a relocated PFN, and including anecdotal speculation on future charter prospects as "hard" data. Such speculation deserves a footnote at best.

Response The disclaimer paragraph is standard language used when preparing forecasts and is appropriate for any forecasting effort. Forecasts are projections of future activity. It is not possible to exactly and precisely predict future outcomes. Other comments noted.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** It is possible to cite historic or credible future data, compare data with other markets, and it is especially possible to backtest a forecast to past outcomes. This forecast fails in all, and the authors probably realized it was not reliable. ] 70

1-5-74 This forecast does not explain the past distribution of traffic in the area, much less the future.

**Response** It is not the intent of the aviation forecasts to examine in detail past distribution of traffic only from the perspective of predicting the future of aviation demand and traffic. The forecasts are used to assist in planning airport facilities to meet forecasted aviation demand.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** In this case the forecast would assist planners to conclude a new airport is not needed in the forecast period. ] 71

1-5-75 Agree that Dothan is not a great factor in the PFN service area. Tallahassee, however, should be analyzed as an adjacent market, primarily because Tallahassee also had Airtran low-fare service during 2002-2004. This Airtran service influenced PFN traffic just as Airtran at PNS affected VPS. When Airtran left the TLH market in September 2004, PFN traffic immediately increased significantly. Should low-fare service return to Tallahassee before starting in PFN (this is likely in view of the relative size of the markets), PFN would again be adversely affected, especially at the new location. Furthermore, AirTran has withdrawn all regional jet service on their system, thus biasing AirTran even more toward larger markets. With no analysis of TLH, this forecast is invalid.

**Response** The FAA discussed Tallahassee Regional Airport (TLH) along with other commercial service airports in the region, as alternative airports to PFN in the FEIS. Both TLH and Pensacola Regional Airport (PNS) are approximately 100 miles from Panama City. In Section 1.6 of the FEIS, it is acknowledged that low fare service at PNS had some effect on traffic at PFN, but was considered not to have as great of an effect as low fare service to Okaloosa Regional Airport, because of the greater distance to PNS. The same would be considered true for TLH. Although no direct discussion of TLH is included in the Airport Sponsor's forecast, it is not likely that TLH would have any greater effect than PNS. Airline market responses are not the basis for developing forecasts—demand in the region is the fundamental basis for developing a forecast.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Apparently the "fundamental basis" for the Sponsor's forecast was to develop the most optimistic forecast possible, whether it conformed to FAA variance recommendations or not. The most notable conclusion is that even this distorted forecast falls within the capabilities of the local airport except for the totally unbelievable daily widebody from the UK. ] 72

1-5-76 PNS does not significantly overlap the PFN air service area because VPS is between PNS and PFN. TLH does overlap and must be considered in any leakage analysis. Any "tension" between service areas not connected by interstate highways is predominantly between adjacent areas, not "skip" areas.

**Response** Comment noted.

- 1-5-77** PFN had MAINLINE service from 1991-1995, which overserved the market (from the airline view) and softened fares. *Some traffic may have been diverted from VPS during this time, but the overall mainline load factor was 55%, indicating that the PFN market simply was (and is) too small for mainline service in an environment needing 70+ percent LF to break even.*
- Response** Comment noted.
- Response** Comment noted.
- 1-5-78** AirTran did not move all NW Florida service to PNS; it also served TLH, which is adjacent to PFN, in 2002-2004. This adjacent low-fare service drained significant traffic from PFN.
- Response** Comment noted.
- 1-5-79** These observations reinforce the view that more "tension" exists between PNS and VPS than between PNS and PFN.
- Response** Comment noted.
- 1-5-80** If TLH is included, the rank is: PNS, TLH, VPS, PFN. This begins to get at PFN's real problem, which is the ABSOLUTE SIZE of its market, not its RELATIVE SIZE. Capacity can only be added in discrete increments, either regional jet (50 to 70 seats) or mainline (100+ seats). AirTran tried all three of the larger markets (PNS, TLH, and VPS), and withdrew from all but the largest, PNS (700,000+ enplanements). This indicates there may be an absolute floor on the market size to attract mainline low-fare service, and it is somewhere above 400,000 enplanements. When PFN exceeds 400,000 enplanements, low-fare service becomes a possibility. All this further depends on the outcome of legacy airline restructuring, which will close the fare gap somewhat. The present PFN airport is very capable of carrying 500,000 domestic enplanements, and relocating it does not attract enough additional enplanements to justify its (\$250 to \$400 Million) cost.
- Response** Comment noted.
- 1-5-81** *All true except for the absence of TLH data. This narrative describes the same market experimentation mentioned above. Both Delta and AirTran oversupplied the smaller THREE markets at different times, and the low-fare market settled for now on PNS alone. The only difference is that Delta loses more money in an oversupply situation than AirTran, so Delta withdrew mainline service and retrenched to high-fare R-jets and turboprops after their experiment at PFN.*
- Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-82** Both Aspen and Hilton Head are FAR more constrained than PFN, which has hosted scheduled mainline aircraft to Atlanta and Memphis in the past. Aspen is effectively 3,000 plus/minus feet shorter than PFN and Hilton Head is physically 2,000 feet shorter. Charleston is not constrained at all. VPS is also unconstrained; the terminal size is not a factor and VPS has mainline service to Atlanta and Memphis. This forecast continues to ignore the obvious and strain to find correlations that do not stand up to scrutiny.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-83** I agree, MARKET SIZE sets airplane size. Runway length and terminals do not. After the threshold for mainline service by a network carrier is exceeded, then you should forecast the market size that will attract low-fare competition. Market size is DOMINANT as a variable, but this report continues to strain at market SHARE of a market that cannot support mainline service.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-84** The tables also show KEY WEST at 377,000 enplanements, over 1000 mile journey, and a 4800 FOOT RUNWAY that the forecast fails to mention. THERE IS NO CORRELATION BETWEEN RUNWAY AND TRAFFIC IF THE RUNWAY IS LONG ENOUGH TO OPERATE FROM. This paragraph alone discredits this forecast AGAIN.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-85** Once again, an analysis including TLH must be done to cover all the service areas affecting PFN. Note that moving the airport west favors TLH as a competitor.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-86** Figure 1-3 is an example of oversimplifying the data. The most current stable trend (1994-2002) is "flat", suggesting that the TAF projection is as likely as the HNTB projection. Any forecasts derived from the HNTB projection are suspect.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's forecasts were not developed or adopted by the FAA, but were used to provide additional information regarding the full range of potential impacts of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and the alternatives.

1-5-87 If the underlying ABSOLUTE passengers-per-day is examined, only the nearby hubs show any promise of NONSTOP service from PFN in a 20-year planning period. All of these hubs have been served already except Charlotte and Houston, both of which can be served from the present airport when traffic is sufficient. The distant multi-airport complexes obviously CANNOT be lumped together in search of NONSTOP traffic. It is likely that much "Atlanta" traffic is really network traffic, either international or on new domestic itineraries originating from Atlanta after the PFN-ATL leg.

**Response** The commenter's last sentence is incorrect. Origin and destination traffic, as reported, addresses where passengers begin and end their air travel trip—not where they connect. As a result, the number of passengers reported for any market does not include any connecting passengers. For example, passengers connecting in Atlanta to other destinations are not included in the number for Atlanta, but are instead included in the number for the cities where they end their air travel.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I understand that passengers on connecting itineraries are counted to their destination. In a huge hub like Atlanta, many passengers fly over the hub on separate tickets because of internet promotions, gaming the round-trip fare rules, etc. This was a peripheral comment since any Atlanta nonstop traffic is only a 248 mile leg. The real point is that NO nonstop O-D (non-hubbing) city has traffic indicating a nonstop market during the planning period. If this is not correct, please identify the nonstop city. 73

1-5-88 With regional jet service, all the airports have convenient schedules and comparable drive times, so the only differentiating variable is fare. Only low-fare service will significantly drain traffic from one service area to another.

**Response** A number of factors affect airport selection by passengers, with just one of those being fares.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Fares are the dominant factor, assuming comparable access and frequency. 74

1-5-89 Another instance of "cherry-picking" the data to favor relocating PFN. Try this scenario (which is more likely than any posed in this forecast): TLH regains low-fare service and drains away 10 percent of PFN's traffic. Then VPS gains low-fare service (longest runway/new terminal/larger market, no lease constraints against low-fare service), and drains another 10 percent. Where does this leave PFN, regardless of location? Still waiting its turn to grow to a viable low-fare market. (20-25 years at least).

**Response** Comment noted.

1-5-90 The above paragraph shows the TOTAL FAILURE of the forecast methodology. The reason PFN's actual share was lower is the TLH low-fare drain and the competitive mainline service at VPS, with some additional drain to the low-fares at PNS. This entire premise should be rejected and the forecast re-evaluated using the influence of ADJACENT low-fare competition (TLH:PFN, PNS:VPS, and ultimately VPS:PFN), assuming that historic comparative traffic levels will continue and the largest markets will receive low-fare service first. This is the unpleasant (for PFN) but truthful prospect.

**Response** Comment noted.

1-5-91 "If" statements do not conform or backtest to the actual historical data. Therefore, the estimated pro forma shares do NOT appear reasonable.

Response Comment noted.

1-5-92 The above paragraph is not relevant to this forecast.

Response Historical trends and information are relevant to any forecast. Specifically, this information provides background as to how the airline industry has changed over time and after deregulation.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I was present for deregulation and the airline industry over time. What happened to your position that only local factors and not "airline market responses" are relevant?

75

1-5-93 Update: Delta Connection RJ service to DFW has been terminated. PFN-CVG is still 5200 annually. US Express has been terminated. Delta Connection RJ service PFN-MCO has started. TWELVE total weekday departures (all regionals, 8 to ATL, 3 to MEM, 1 to MCO). This pattern of service is all concentrated in Delta Connection and Northwest AirLink, whose routes and schedules are coordinated and code-shared as one common route system. Where is a new airport justified in this picture?

Response The Airport Sponsor's justification for the new airport is presented in Chapter 2 of the EIS.

1-5-94 AGAIN - There are FOUR NW Florida airports affecting PFN. TLH has about the same service pattern as PNS, except no AirTran low-fare to ATL at present.

Response Comment noted.

1-5-95 A large percentage gain is indicative of a very low starting point. Because the aircraft sizes are discrete, any change from the 19-seat turboprop at the very low end to the next larger class of airplane is a LARGE PERCENTAGE GAIN, but a modest absolute gain in passengers, especially SINCE THE NUMBER OF DAILY DEPARTURES AT PFN HAS DECLINED FROM 24 IN 2001 TO 12 IN 2005. Because the average has a numerator (total seats, up little) and a denominator (total departures, DOWN 50%), the AVERAGE is up.

Response The importance of looking at the number of seats per departure is to quantify total available seats in a specific market. The total available seats may not decrease simply because there are fewer departures. One 50-seat Regional Jet departures provides as many seats as between two and three 19-seat turbo prop aircraft. Therefore, it is important to consider the number of seats per departure.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** That is good arithmetic. It appears that passengers-per-departure has reached 43. Now, why does this indicate we have a need for a substitute airport?

76



1-5-96 What does this have to do with where the PFN airport is located?

Response This information is provided for background and perspective purposes.

1-5-97 US Air is on the brink of liquidation as this is written. Their plans are limited to survival for many years to come.

Response The airline industry as a whole will respond to demand.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 1-5-95.**

77

1-5-98 Delta connection service to MCO has started, without moving the airport. Thanks for not predicting Southwest service - there is a shred of credibility left.

Response Comment noted.

1-5-99 US AirEX departed PFN on 1-8-2005, taking away six daily B1900 departures (4,000 airline operations annually). WHEN do you forecast traffic (passenger and operations) that will support mainline service? This would seem to be the MINIMUM threshold to start seriously planning a new airport.

Response The B1900 seats 19 passengers and does not provide the level of service offered by regional jets or by mainline jet service. It is not uncommon for service by smaller aircraft to end as larger jet aircraft become viable in a specific market or at a specific airport. Airline reaction to a market by the removal of small aircraft cannot alone be considered to reflect on the viability of that market for jet service.

**Hodges FEIS Response: Non-responsive. Please answer the question. 19-seaters fly the same airspace as 150-seaters. When will this substitution occur?**

78

1-5-100 What planners "typically consider" is the planning regime specified by FAA Advisory Circular. "Offering opportunities" is not an objective planning criterion.

Response FAA allows communities the ability to identify how their airport facilities can support the local economy and overall community planning efforts.

**Hodges FEIS Response: True, but still subjective. FAA recognizes it cannot evaluate local booster claims so it simply "allows" them. This project is totally based on such claims after exhausting more objective goals.**

79

1-5-101 Several of these ANECDOTAL "letters of interest" were prompted by airport board solicitations and visits to airlines. No airline actually serving the airport, with aircraft from B1900's to 727's, has ever discontinued service because of runway length. It is always MARKET SIZE AND SEASONALITY. Nothing in this report addresses growing the market, just "wishful thinking" about IF PFN could capture its "pro forma" share of traffic.

Response It is not uncommon for airport sponsors to solicit service from airlines to provide overall better service for their community.

**Hodges FEIS Response: It is common for airlines to give "courtesy" replies and then rely on their own judgment to allocate resources.**

80

**1-5-102** ANOTHER huge percentage gain from a very small base – 50 percent growth is 17 charter operations (is this charter arrivals or “arrivals and departures”, the usual definition of “operations”?). If it is true operations, then it is only eight or nine additional visits. Either way, NOT a statistic to spend \$250 Million on. Charter ENPLANEMENTS is another story, only 700 per year, implying only 33 passengers per charter, not very lucrative for mainline airplanes.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-103** The actual documented data in this report is weak enough, without considering the airport management’s “feelings” about charters. Perhaps someone could WRITE DOWN exactly what was requested and why it was not done. (One such inquiry from Seattle died when the charter operator quoted a price to the prospective customer. The 757 could have flown the charter.) Many modern charter aircraft could easily serve PFN from Seattle or Montreal. Would they be numerous enough to meet the FAA planning threshold of 500 operations per year?

**Response** Runway length analyses reviewed for the FEIS show that the commenter’s suggestion that the current runway length is adequate for charter operations to Seattle or Montreal is incorrect.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Please be specific – which airplane and which charter opportunity has been lost, and why? } 81

**1-5-104** What are the increased missions and how many charters are involved? This is supposed to be a FORECAST based on data, not speculation.

**Response** FAA was not provided specific information regarding the potential for increased missions; however, it would be appropriate to assume that charter operations would increase if the number or magnitude of missions at the local military facilities are increased.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I have not been allowed to assume anything not documented – please furnish the basis for this claim, since the entire difference between the existing airport and West Bay has boiled down to one 737 to near hub daily and a mysterious charter market. } 82

**1-5-105** Okaloosa will offer a good test of Mr. Warren’s thesis. The new VPS lease allows both domestic and international charters, a new passenger terminal has been opened, and Destin has recently undertaken building a convention center. If this is successful, then PFN will again be in head-to-head competition with VPS, not a bright prospect.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-106** Another anecdotal report, and insufficient prospective traffic to support the funding required under FAA planning guidelines.

**Response** In the development of forecasts, it is important to consider available information for the overall development of the anticipated growth rates and alternative forecast scenarios.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Non-responsive jargon. } 83

1-5-107 How many operations in what types of aircraft?

**Response** In a review of correspondence, one letter refers to specific aircraft types. That letter was addressed to Mr. Randy Curtis, and signed by Mr. Bob Canady and Ms. Vanessa Poch and refers to a meeting on February 11, 2000. That letter states that the aircraft types to be used in the short term included Boeing 737-200, DC-9, or similar aircraft with a planned load of 110 to 140 passengers, with a switch to a Boeing 757-200 aircraft with a planned load of about 200 passengers in the longer term.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** I believe you will find the 757-200 quite capable of charter flights from 6300 foot runways. Air Force Two was easily accommodated.

84

1-5-108 Why would you assume half cargo loads? The current cargo enplaned is less than 3 POUNDS per departure, and there is essentially ZERO international cargo in the forecast.

**Response** FAA was not provided with information supporting this assumption.

1-5-109 Delta withdrew the mainline jets because of size and seasonality in the market which reduced the average load factor to 55%. Mainline aircraft commitments are driven by REVENUE potential, NOT cost savings.

**Response** The commenter has not provided background information to support the claim regarding the reasons that Delta Air Lines discontinued mainline service to PFN. The reason provided is speculative.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** As an ex-Delta participant in scheduling and aircraft routing activities, I am quite sure this comment is correct, but Delta will probably not put it in writing out of "courtesy". I can assure you it was not because the runway prevented operating to Atlanta with the available passenger loads, as asserted by the Sponsor. If you have a better reason documented, please give it. Delta's recent actions speak much more clearly, having de-hubbed DFW including nonstop service from PFN, curtailed New York nonstop service in all NW Florida markets, and severely curtailed mainline service in smaller markets and off-peak times in larger markets.

85

1-5-110 Please show the business plan to aggregate 500 operations annually in these types, show which "transatlantic" operations beyond the UK are feasible and likely from 8400 ft. This charter scenario is pure speculation, with no likelihood of reaching 500 operations per year during a 20-year planning period.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor would not be responsible for developing a business plan for airline service—that would be prepared by the airline.

1-5-111 This is reasonable, and represents a fleet mix of perhaps 6 mainline (4 to ATL, 2 to MEM) and 12 RJ airplanes (to ATL, MEM, CLT, MCO, CVG, DFW, HOU).

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-112** Let's examine the actual operations implied by this arbitrary 5 percent increment. You are saying that in 2028, 20 years from 2008, only 21,000 additional enplanements would result from the 6800 foot runway. ONE daily departure of a mainline jet at 75% LF (110 pax per departure) will produce 40,000 enplanements, so it must not be an increase in mainline jets you contemplate. ONE daily departure of an RJ will produce 16,000 enplanements. The only market that might require the 6800 foot runway and is beyond the near hubs is New York. Pensacola and Tallahassee have recently acquired New York RJ service, BUT both airports were well over the 400,000 or so enplanements forecasted for PFN/2028. So, it appears that the arbitrary 5 percent increment is as likely from 6304 ft as from 6800 ft. If I am missing something, please correct me.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-113** Scenario 3 is not going to happen. The community impact of building an 8400 ft runway is devastating. The real options are: operate the 6304 6800 ft airport until a credible forecast of 500,000+ enplanements is within 10 years or so, then build a new airport; OR, JUSTIFY a new airport on other grounds (Okaloosa demonstrates a convention market, a REAL aviation-related industry expresses interest, etc.)

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-114** Scenario 4 is also not going to happen, because the expenditure of \$250-\$400M demands some increase in capability, and we have shown that 6800 ft is not worth the cost. The "pro forma" forecast method has not been validated and is no better than the TAF.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-115** Scenario 5 is not readily predictable, but I am willing to make a "long bet" that PFN will NOT have 5 weekly charters from the UK in 2028. Why choose the UK? Is it because the 8400 ft is not sufficient for diverse origins like the Orient, continental Europe, or Africa? If we agreed on perhaps 30,000 domestic and international charter enplanements, plus TAF domestic enplanements (394,000?), we arrive at approximately 424,000, which is the same as Scenario 1 or 2 traffic. The net result? We are building a new airport in 2008 which will not materially change air service except for the charter market, which is volatile and unpredictable, plus being 10 to 20 years beyond opening date. In addition, we are cannibalizing whatever value the close-in airport has for the incumbent citizens of Panama City Bay County (we have no obligation to enhance Walton County air service). The General Aviation value is also greatly diminished for the incumbents, discussed in Comments on the Executive Summary.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-5-116** The distance from Grayton Beach to the new airport site is approx. 31 miles, since the new airport is five miles from West Bay (the town, not the estuary). The choice between VPS and "new PFN" will be based on fares, not road access. The new airport is better for access from the periphery of West Bay (the estuary, not the town) BUT this area is ABSOLUTELY DEVOID of population, public utilities, or services. The infrastructure cost to populate this area will be staggering. The sensible plan is to reserve land for an airport (or locate a better upland site and buy it) and let the State and the landowner grow the population before committing for an airport. Don't forget the influence of low fares in TLH, when they return.

**Response** Comment noted.

1-5-117 The "pro forma" share is irrelevant. South Walton County now has 4-lane divided highway all the way to Niveville, making VPS much more accessible than it was when it was offering low fares and draining PFN traffic in 1996-2001. Should low fares return, VPS will get its share (or more) of traffic, and "new PFN" will also be vulnerable to leakage to FLH with the drive distance to PFN increased 20+ miles for east Bay County.

Response Comment noted.

1-5-118 NONE of these nonstop markets except the speculative international charters require even a 6800 ft runway! All except CLT and IAH have already been served from 6304 ft., and both CLT and IAH are closer than CVG or DFW, already served.

Response FAA performed independent runway length analyses as discussed in the FEIS.

1-5-119 The only Florida airport in the above list is Orlando-Sanford, the dedicated charter airport for the Orlando leisure destination. PFN is not in that league, as already admitted by dropping the top 15 leisure markets from the analysis (Orlando is #2).

Response Comment noted.

1-5-120 Air cargo enplaned on air carrier flights in 2004 averaged LESS THAN THREE POUNDS per departure, and air cargo enplaned on the 9 cargo departures averaged LESS THAN 250 POUNDS per departure. Discussion of capacity growth is irrelevant in the face of these "demand" statistics.

Response All aspects of aviation demand are relevant in the development of forecasts.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Please elaborate on the relevance of 3-pounds-per-airline-flight and 250-pounds-per-cargo-flight on the development of a new airport. What factor is projected to increase cargo to require an 8400-foot or even a 6800 foot runway. Build it and they will come?

86

1-5-121 14 percent growth is from SIX based jets to TEN, a gain of FOUR. Not exactly a facility challenge.

Response It is not clear what statistics the commenter is referring to in this comment. The combination of all aspects of aviation demand and the requirements to accommodate that demand is important for determining facility needs.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The report stated 14 percent growth of based jet aircraft over a period of years. It failed to state that the actual growth to fulfill this was FOUR jet aircraft. This project suffers from a low base of activity.

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1-5-122 See earlier comments in the Executive Summary on this subject.

Response See responses to comments on the Executive Summary.

1-5-123 See earlier comments in the Executive Summary on this subject.

Response See responses to comments on the Executive Summary.

3-4-124 Lack of land - there is sufficient land to expand the airport, as evidenced by FAA's own selection of two on-site expansion alternatives as "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable". I submit that an 8400 foot runway on the present site is none of these, and that at least four more suitable alternatives are available (6800 ft on-site, 6800 ft on-site with EMAS, 6800 ft on-site with EMAS on pier, dual facilities/two airports). Furthermore, the Sponsor has shown no need for ANY expansion during the planning period. FAA has no mandate to subsidize "ancillary development" with the limited federal funds available.

Response See Chapter 3 alternatives analysis in Sections 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10.

**I-5-126**      Airspace conflicts. The local airspace is not "complex" by any objective comparison with truly busy regions. The "analysis" of airspace issues in this report is not a rigorous, data-driven investigation. Instead, military RAPCON personnel have been portrayed as recommending a solution that reduces their workload. Such a narrative does not rise to the level of decisive concern. There is no record of the Sponsor or FAA formally requesting the Dept. of Defense to endorse alternatives with supporting data and reasoning. The local RAPCON staff opened their meeting with a declaration that they did not wish to be cited as the reason for selecting any preferred alternative. According to the Appendix, RAPCON also said that the current airspace situation is the most benign. The consultant chose to ignore these statements and draw a conclusion that the airspace conflicts are decisive, and furthermore attributed these local opinions as USAF-DoD positions. "Airspace conflicts" do not exist and any of the proposed configurations are well within routine parameters for airspace and ATC procedure design and practice.

**Response**      Complexity is generally defined in terms of traffic volume and traffic mix. The PFN area has traffic mix that covers the entire aircraft performance spectrum from military high performance supersonic aircraft to air carrier turbojet and turboprop aircraft to general aviation turbojet, turboprop and piston powered aircraft. Comment noted on RAPCON comment.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** See previous comments on the relative importance of USAF comments, particularly the comments of Gen. Egginton on the DEIS. Complexity has not been shown to be a controlling factor – it has not even been defined in a way that a knowledgeable commenter can respond to. What is the insuperable deficiency – procedures, proximity, SUA's, TERP's ? Or is it just that profound "complexity" that can be resolved everywhere but in Bay County? It appears that the FAA has decided not to try to devise all reasonable alternatives, just to paper over a decision in advance.

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**4-6-127**      Constraints of Goose Bayou to the northwest and SR 390 to the southeast – FILLING Goose Bayou has been established as a constraint. Building a pier appears to be feasible.

**Response**      See the October 24, 2003 and February 19, 2004 letters from FDEP. These letters are included in Appendix D.

**4-18-128**      SR 390 is to be rebuilt and realigned over the next several years, and there is no reason that it cannot be realigned to accommodate any of the 6800 ft alternatives.

**Response**      Construction of the SR 390 widening in the vicinity of the airport is not funded in the FDOT's five-year program or its long-range Transportation Improvement Program. Only the current preliminary design and environmental phases are funded, and any dates identified for construction have been shown by FDOT and its consultant for planning purposes only. The relocation SR 390 would have to meet design criteria including the geometry around the runway end to meet the design speed of 45 miles per hour. Right-of-way at this segment of the highway is proposed to require 180 feet in the FDOT project and therefore is assumed in the relocation of SR 390 in the EMAS alternative.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Building a new airport is not funded either, but this has not precluded proposing implausible alternatives. Relocating 390 may even occur to accommodate redevelopment of the existing site. Apparently developers are much better at moving road plans than airports who have lost interest in their assets.

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4-11-129 Recent damage to airfield facilities from storm surges – the facilities have been damaged on occasion, but not catastrophically or even seriously. The airfield was closed for hours and the lighting system was restored in days after hurricanes, then permanently repaired. These weather events resulted in much less downtime than almost any northern airport.

**Response** See Section 2.4.2.5. Following Hurricane Opal, the airport was closed for approximately 3 days to commercial service because the airfield was under water and the flooding impacted airfield lighting.

**Hodges FEIS Response: I stand corrected on re-opening for commercial service but I question whether the airfield was under water for three days. Emergency relief flights operated from PFN.**

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1-5-130 Anticipated growth in the region both in terms of population and potential air service – neither the Sponsor nor the FAA has produced a forecast of sufficient traffic to justify the proposed project. What is the “anticipation” based on?

**Response** See TAF projections included in Section 1.7.

5-5-131 This narrative does not disclose that FAA only CONDITIONALLY accepted the Feasibility Study. The press reported on August 22, 2000 that FAA, in its acceptance letter to the Sponsor, was concerned about wetland impacts, and also that FAA wanted the initial runway design limited to 6800 feet “until such time as demand supports otherwise.” FAA reportedly also asked for more data on “parameters airlines use in determining whether or not to bring larger aircraft to a market”. The Sponsor has not provided any such data in this FEIS, and FAA has not accepted the Sponsor’s need for an 8400 foot runway.

**Response** The letter dated 8/18/00 does not conditionally accept the Feasibility Study, as stated in first page of letter.

**Hodges FEIS Response: Upon re-reading, you are correct about conditional acceptance, but the comments from FAA have never been resolved for the record. Please furnish the Sponsor’s replies to the FAA comments.**

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1-5-132 A copy of FAA’s CONDITIONAL letter of concurrence with the “Feasibility Study 2000”, dated August 18, 2000 is enclosed. This is clearly the letter covered by the press report of August 22, 2000. IN THE FOUR PLUS YEARS SINCE THAT LETTER, THE SPONSOR HAS REVEALED ABSOLUTELY NOTHING PUBLICLY OF IT’S RESPONSE, IF ANY, TO FAA’S COMMENTS. IT IS ESPECIALLY DISTURBING THAT THE SPONSOR ASSISTED AN ANONYMOUS SMEAR CAMPAIGN IN 2003 SUPPORTING THE RELOCATION BY ASSERTING THAT PEN FACED MANDATORY COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT RSA DESIGN STANDARDS. THE FAA LETTER DIRECTLY CONTRADICTS THAT CLAIM AND ALSO RAISES SEVERAL LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED ASSIDUOUSLY BY THE SPONSOR. IF FAA WONDERS WHY THIS PROJECT LOST THE ELECTION REFERENDUM 55-45, IT IS LARGELY BECAUSE OF THIS EVASIVENESS ABOUT ANY NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THIS “FIELD OF DREAMS”. Neither the traffic forecast nor the financial forecast in the FEASIBILITY STUDY has been met, and the Sponsor’s response has been to commission yet another forecast that is even more unrealistic and contains no input from airlines.

**Response** Comment noted.

3-1-133 The SITE SELECTION was driven as much by the location of the land to be donated as any technical factors. More environmentally suitable sites can be found farther north, and in time a regional airport to complement PFN as a community GA airport makes sense. However, political factors have limited the sites to be wholly in Bay County, on the St. Joe Co. land, and accelerated by decades. The airport special district is a political subdivision of the State of Florida, and the legislature can expand its jurisdiction without limit in the State. The proposed project already extends into Washington county to provide a site for the Outer Marker navigaid, and the special district act is being recodified to allow land acquisition outside of Bay county.

**Response** Airport sponsors, not the FAA, propose airport development projects. In this case, the purpose of the EIS is to disclose the Airport Sponsor's proposed project, analyze the associated environmental impacts, and present those results together with reasonable alternatives. Notwithstanding technical factors, including safety concerns, that are assessed independently by the FAA, the actual or supposed rationale used by the Airport Sponsor for determining where a proposed airport should be located, statutory or otherwise, is beyond the scope of the EIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** FAA is responsible for developing "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable" alternatives for this analysis. Arguably, there is not a site entirely within Bay County that can support an 8400-to-12,000 to 2-x-parallel runway airport and not cause irreparable harm to the environment. This comment is intended to show that confining the project to Bay County is a desire, not a requirement, and in fact the law has already been changed to allow the Sponsor to operate in other counties. I request that FAA consider this alternative in a Supplemental EIS.

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5-5-134 Sale and redevelopment of the present site is an integral part of the proposed federal action, at least to the extent of identifying and mitigating any environmental impacts occurring by 2018. Absent the federal action of relocation, these impacts would not occur, and should an on-site alternative be selected, the on-site impacts would be covered. It is disingenuous to REQUIRE an action (redevelopment) as a prerequisite, then avoid accounting for the impact except in generalities like "whatever happens will be done in accordance with law and regulation". This trivializes the cumulative impact of the airport-replacement program as a whole. The Sponsor has stated that it will need the proceeds from the airport sale BEFORE selling bonds, and that the Sponsor will assist the buyer in obtaining the land-use entitlements needed to redevelop the land. These actions add to the rationale that redevelopment impacts MUST be accounted for.

**Response** Redevelopment of the Existing Site is not part of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. In November 2005, new information was made available by the Airport Sponsor related to potential redevelopment of the Existing Site. This information included a *Background Analysis and Master Planning Report for Redevelopment* (Redevelopment Report) with three potential redevelopment options for the site. See **Appendix V** for a copy of this report.

The Airport Sponsor has also published a Request for Proposals (RFP) for purchase of the Existing Site. See **Appendix V** for a copy of the RFP. That document indicates that the developer will be responsible for completing a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) "and obtain the approvals to implement said DRI from the appropriate local, state, and federal governmental agencies." As a result, the developer, not the Airport Sponsor or the FAA, would be responsible for mitigation measures, permits, and approvals associated with any redevelopment of the Existing Site.

The FAA has developed a composite redevelopment scenario for the Existing Site which is based on the Redevelopment Report. The potential impacts of that redevelopment scenario are included in Chapter 5.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** FAA must account for all impacts reasonably expected to flow from the federal action. If FAA allows the Sponsor to advance redevelopment by using the sale proceeds as collateral to finance the federal action before decommissioning PFN, redevelopment becomes an integral part of the project. This "creative financing" violates the FAA's regulations against encumbering a grant-supported airport. The Sponsor has also expressed its intent to assure that the purchaser pursues a DRI and to support the purchaser with resources concerning the existing conditions at the site. FAA must exercise its responsibility. I again request a Supplemental EIS to analyze the impact of redevelopment at the same level of detail as the analysis of the West Bay project.

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**2-1-135** Except for the main runway extension and incremental developments, these actions (parallel runway, new terminal and ACTC) are not likely to occur. They are "straw men" to dazzle the public with the grandeur of the plan.

**Response** The referenced project components are part of the Airport Sponsor's ultimate development of the West Bay site. They are disclosed as part of the Airport Sponsor's alternative development plans.

**2-2-136** PFN does NOT "need to comply with . . . design standards for existing facilities. . .". The FAA guidelines and practices for addressing RSA standards at existing facilities are both complex and flexible, spanning several documents. The key concept in these documents is "practicability", the idea that RSA improvements are not mandatory because imposition of mandatory standards would degrade the national aviation system disproportionately to the risk reduction. The Sponsor has never proposed any RSA improvements except relocation of the entire airport. If this became the benchmark of "practicability", it would be devastating to civil aviation, effectively shutting down many airports vital to the system. At PFN, objective risk analysis would probably show more risk from the extra road distance to the proposed airport than from the nonstandard RSA's. Both of these risks are minute and have no place in the analysis.

**Response** Comment noted.

**2-2-137** PFN'S "constraints" are typical of most commercial service airports, as discussed in preceding comments. This is a "desire", not a purpose or need.

**Response** Comment noted.

**2-2-138** The Sponsor has not shown any need for expanded facilities to accommodate increased domestic air service, and no CREDIBLE forecast of sufficient international charter activity to posit it as driving the critical airplane type for a new runway.

**Response** The 8,400' runway is analyzed in the EIS because it is the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The 6,800' runway length is also analyzed in the EIS, including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed in the commenter's Exhibits 1 and 2.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** See previous responses on the 8400 foot on-site alternative. It is not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable".

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**2-2-139** I agree that the Sponsor should have a long-range plan, and that development trends MAY lead to need for a larger airport. Given an updated plan, a new airport could be built over any 5-year period. It is not necessary to invest in a complete new airport decades before it is needed. The current "Sector Plan" was a forced exercise that created a circular argument. The Plan exists only to accommodate an airport (it self-destructs if no airport is built), and the airport exists only to fulfill the Plan.

**Response** Comment noted.

**2-2-140** This narrative says in many more words the same thing I said above. To summarize again, it is not mandatory for PFN to meet the current design standards.

**Response** Runway Safety Areas are part of purpose and need for the proposed project.

2-2-141 Runway 32 is the "fair weather" approach to PFN, and it cannot be foreseen when a precision approach would be needed. As usual, there is no data to show a need for improving any approach. Actual operations at the existing minimums for the runway in use are probably less than 100 hours per year. Weather is NOT a significant factor at PFN.

Response Current RPZ for 32 does not meet FAA recommendations for RPZ. There are limitations of existing conditions.

2-2-142 The narrative above is a detailed statement of the routing responsibilities of the Tyndall AFB RAPCON. Nothing in the Appendix report of the RAPCON discussion indicates that the RAPCON prefers one PFN location over another - the inference, if any, is for the status quo. In any event, these legal discussions cannot be characterized as official USAF or DoD positions expressing a preference for the Sponsor's proposal.

The Sponsor's consultants continuously "shade" facts to favor relocation. When evaluating the West Bay sites in the SITE SELECTION STUDY (December 2000), they encountered the low-level east-west SUA corridor. Every operation in and out of Bay County northward must cross this corridor, but the study dismissed this "potential conflict" because the corridor is 3-dimensional, capped at 2,000 feet, thus most operations will go over it.

In fact, the MOAs to the east are also 3-dimensional, either capped at 4,000 ft or floored at 6,000 ft, and the MOAs are only active intermittently, so most operations either do not penetrate them or do not encounter any delay or re-route. In the consultant narrative, one would infer that the MOA's are always active barriers and only penetrated at some risk that must be mitigated by RAPCON - this is far from candid.

The recent marked reduction in air carrier operations further reduces any perceived "conflict" for many years to come.

"Complexity" and "potential conflicts" have not been defined and no formal airspace study has been performed. In summary, airspace management and radar approach control is not a decisive factor and should not be accepted as a purpose or need.

Response See Appendix D for the complete correspondence from Brigadier General Larry D. New, Commander of the 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing to Mr. Randy Curtis. This correspondence states "In response to your letter, Tyndall Air Force Base is aware that the Panama City-Bay County International Airport (PFN) Environmental Impact Statement will assess at least three alternatives for the Panama City airport to include an expansion of the existing airport facilities, relocation of the airport to a site in the West Bay area, or take no action." It further states that "A relocation of the airport to the West Bay area would facilitate the de-confliction of the respective airfields. Considering the factors discussed, of the alternatives being assessed by the EIS, the relocation of PFN to the West Bay area over the other two alternatives has less adverse impact on Tyndall operations."

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The screening criterion "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is invalid and arbitrary. This criterion was contrived by a consultant just for this EIS and does not exist in the FAA's own airspace/airport design methodology. FAA's "Airports District Office" did not even seek an official opinion from FAA's airspace experts, relying instead on Sponsor-solicited comments from a (since departed) local unit commander. The current local USAF commander (B/G Egginton) provided additional comments on the DEIS that are included in Vol. III "Response to Comments - Federal, State, and Local Agencies". These comments are considerably more objective and benign in their view of the alternatives. From Gen. Egginton's comment: "Fulfilling this mission requires either the maintenance of the current airspace configuration (SUAs, ATCAAs, and approach/departure corridors) or that the design of any new airport and its associated approach/departure corridors do not interfere with Tyndall's SUAs, ATCAAs, approaches and departures." These comments properly make no mention of the superiority of any potential configuration, and do not request addressing any "potential conflicts" - only that no alternative should reduce the operational space available to Tyndall and thus create actual constraints on Tyndall's mission. FAA is acting arbitrarily if it sets out to relieve "potential conflicts" rather than applying its own resources to the trivial problem of allocating airspace to three airports each 10 miles apart so that all reasonable and prudent alternatives can be evaluated.

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If one accepts that the Level 1 screen "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" is valid (and I do not for reasons given above), FAA's application of this screen is contradictory and arbitrary. (See Table S-1, "Summary of Alternatives Evaluation - Level 1 - Purpose and Need"). The "No-Action" alternative passes this screen for the obvious reason that it cannot be rationalized away like the "Separate Facilities" alternative, even though all future operations would operate in this supposedly unacceptable "potential conflict" environment, and in fact all likely future operations in the planning period have already been surpassed in the past by the "No-Action" alternative. The "Separate Facilities" alternative is found to fail this screen, even though all future operations would be split between three airspace-standards-compliant airports within approximately 20 miles instead of two airspace-compliant airports within 10 miles, with the supposedly more benign general aviation operations biased toward the airport needing the most relief from alleged "potential conflicts".

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**2-2-143** As usual, no data. The population of Bay county in 2000 was 150,000 - a 20 percent increase by 2018 would increase it by 30,000, to 180,000. 40 percent of 30,000 is 12,000, or approximately 6,000 households. Generously assuming \$100,000 per household income, yields \$600 Million in personal income. At 65 enplanements per \$1M of income, enplanements increase by 40,000. This creates demand for ONE 737 daily or TWO regional jets daily. Since the St. Joe properties will be populated with wealthier households than the average, enplanement growth over the entire county will not be proportionate. Single-digit growth in departures at the present site (remember, only TWELVE departures currently) do not create "land use compatibility" problems that require or justify relocation. This element is a desire and perhaps a purpose, but not a need.

**Response** This was a purpose identified by the Airport Sponsor. The FEIS identified projected needs based on the TAF and FAA's determination of runway length as well as the Airport Sponsor's proposed project.

**1-1-144** Another subjective narrative describing the existing facility and finding no remarkable problems. Ticket counter and operations space has been vacated by US Air Express in 2005. Abandoning these facilities prematurely and duplicating them at a new site will certainly be "complicated and expensive", whereas the incremental expansion would be proportionate to the need being addressed.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-2-145** Sowell Aviation has significant unused ramp space. Two new GA hangars are planned for the northeast quadrant, and siting them has been routine. The most damaging factor for GA is the Sponsor's determination to decommission this accessible community airport and force all GA activity to a remote airline-centric airport, all for less than 20 airline departures in the foreseeable future.

**Response** Comment noted.

**1-1-146** There is no cargo operation in the subject building, and no forecast for cargo that will require a building. The Sponsor's traffic report for calendar year 2004 shows 710,000 POUNDS of cargo boarded, approximately 2000 POUNDS (ONE TON) per day. 22,000 POUNDS of cargo was boarded on 9,000 air carrier departures, an average of 2.44 POUNDS PER DEPARTURE. The balance of the cargo (690,000 POUNDS) was boarded on 9 small cargo departures each day, each carrying an average of less than 250 POUNDS. This kind of cargo traffic is handled from TRUCKS, not a building.

**Response** Comment noted.

2-1-147 There is no requirement in FAA airfield design requirements for a "perimeter road" FAA training guidance for the runway incursion program recommends that ground vehicles use perimeter or service roads "when available". The existing PIN service road connecting the areas north and south of Runway 14-32 transits the RSA, and this infrequent transit requires coordination with the ACTC, as does any vehicle or airplane transit in the aircraft movement areas of any controlled airfield.

Any of the proposed onsite extension alternatives can accommodate a right-of-way for a service road eastward of the RSA. Exhibits 1 and 2 for EMAS alternatives show a 60 foot service road r/w.

**Response** The comment is correct, but it is not a preferable condition to coordinate with air traffic control. The text has been revised for clarification.

2-1-148 The Sponsor's activities as an industrial real estate developer are not relevant to the aviation requirements for a new airport. Once a threshold need for a new airport is met, then the Sponsor and St. Joe can pursue industrial development. This is pure speculation at a time when most industrial development is going to Asia, not Florida.

**Response** The potential for real estate and economic development is a local issue and is outside of the scope of the federal EIS process and the regulatory responsibility of the FAA.

4-18-149 Rebuilding SR 390 is a significant project several miles long, and accommodating modest airport improvements would not complicate it. Airport surface road traffic under any forecast is not a significant part of the demand on SR390.

Realignment of roads in the region seems to be no problem when a developer needs it, and FDOT spent \$3M on COSMETICS for the public entrance road, so funding is not the problem.

**Response** There are many factors associated with realigning SR 390 that are not considered by the commenter. Equating the Airport Sponsor's proposed project to a \$3 million cosmetic adjustment of public roads is an underestimation. The anticipated cost of using this alternative is in the range of \$50 to \$100 million and would displace over 100 households. Moving these households will have social, economical, and political ramifications. Furthermore, according to comments received from FDOT dated February 2, 2005 the Department has no identified funds for the purpose of relocating this road.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** My comment relates to the relative value of expanding the airport vs. cosmetically improving a 2-lane entrance road. In terms of value, this cosmetic project already funded by FDOT was obviously not evaluated for cost-benefit, whereas FAA would now invoke cost as a constraint on SR 390 improvements. In any event, this EIS is supposedly to determine the preferred alternative without regard to cost (or it would not have chosen the most expensive credible alternative). I don't know the scope of the \$50 to \$100M work, but the cost of the substitute airport has passed \$330 Million NOT including funds for the fabled "West Bay Preservation Area". I assume that a prudent Sponsor would not pursue an elaborate on-site alternative, but return to planning and develop a sensible and non-intrusive regional air carrier airport. I wonder what will be cut out of the "vision" when the cost must be reduced?

97

4-18-150 Tunneling of 390 is another "straw man" proposed to put the existing airport in the worst light. If the runway were to cross SR 390 (and that is NOT NECESSARY), it would be much more sensible to close Runway 14-32 temporarily and bridge the road.

**Response** The proposal to temporarily close Runway 14-32 and bridge SR 390 would have significant impacts. Elevating Runway 14-32 and its adjacent taxiway would entail significant amounts of fill and bridging. Advisory Circular 150/5300-13's minimum longitudinal gradient slope requirements would require elevating Runway 14-32 and many connecting taxiways and aprons would need to be regraded and paved to meet new runway elevations as well as minimum AC standards. It is anticipated that 1/3 of the Airport's taxiways would have to be adjusted to fit this proposal. Additionally the expansion of Runway 14-32's parallel taxiway would require the acquisition and demolition of many households located adjacent to the Airport property to allow for the construction of its safety area. Stanford Drive would also be located within the taxiways safety area and as such would need to be relocated. Therefore, the FAA determined that fewer impacts would result from the tunneling of SR 390 versus bridging.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Thankfully neither of these will be necessary.

98

4-18-151 These are factors that should be addressed much more urgently than relocating the airport. The airport should be expanded and perhaps relocated when needed for aviation. Airport vehicular traffic is a minor part of total traffic. Relocating the airport inconveniences users to/from the host community -- no attempt has been made to quantify or mitigate this impact.

Response See Section 5.23 of the FEIS.

4-6-152 It seems established that no significant filling of Goose Bayou will be permitted, although the following language from the special district statute of the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority suggests that the Sponsor has not exhausted its possible remedies to allow a modest impact on Goose Bayou:

"(b) Establish and maintain such airports in, over, and upon any public waters of this state within the limits of jurisdiction of, or bordering on any municipality, any submerged land under such public waters, and any artificial or reclaimed land which, before the artificial making or reclamation thereof, constituted a portion of the submerged land under such public waters.

(c) Construct and maintain terminal buildings, landing floats, causeways, roadways, bridges for approach to or connecting with the airport, and land floats and breakwaters for the protection of any such airport."

A near-by residential development is in the permitting process -- this project will accommodate residential development by building several bridges over the seagrass. Numerous private piers have been permitted.

Response See the October 2003 and February 2004 FDEP letters included in Appendix D. Based on review of these letters, the FAA determined that any impacts to seagrass and state sovereign submerged land in Goose Bayou would not likely be permitted by FDEP, whether by fill or pier. The referenced statute language has no relevance to Bay County.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The referenced statute language is in the special district act of another airport authority in Florida. The Florida legislature has amended the special act for the Bay County airport district TWICE in the last ten years, and there is no reason to assume it could not be done again, if the proper incentives existed. FAA shows little determination compared to the local developer who proposes to bridge several estuarine islands for development. We will see what happens to the bay, but FDEP will not be the agency that protects it.

99

3-4-153 Exhibit 1 is an alternative for developing the 6800 ft onsite extension without filling or encroaching on Goose Bayou. Exhibit 2 is an alternative for developing the 6800 ft onsite extension using a pier to support a 475-foot EMAS. These alternatives should be substituted for the EMAS-on-fill alternative, and the Level 2 evaluation should be re-done. The EMAS-on-fill alternative should never have been proposed -- it was known in advance to be unlawful.

Response The EMAS alternative included in the DEIS was developed based on a comment received at the May 2003 public information meeting. The alternatives depicted in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS.

FAA was not aware of the FDEP concerns with and objections to impacts to Goose Bayou until the FDEP letters of October 24, 2003 and February 19, 2004 were received.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Ignorance of a policy is not an excuse -- the record is full of the history of the Goose Bayou impacts.

100

**3-1-154** Note that none of the current alternatives impacting Goose Bayou (except the unlawful 8400 ft NW extension) are comparable to the Sponsor's 1998 Proposal that would have filled over 30 acres for a 3300 foot fill extension.

**Response** Alternatives included in the EIS do not have to be comparable to alternatives previously proposed by the Airport Sponsor.

**5-5-155** It is also undetermined what impact the redevelopment of the present site will have on the estuary. This redevelopment is an integral part of the federal action and must be included in this EIS at the same level of detail as the project at West Bay (St. Joe development conditioned on the new airport AND the new airport itself).

**Response** Redevelopment of the Existing Site is not part of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. Since publication of the DEIS, new information was made available by the Airport Sponsor related to potential redevelopment of the Existing Site. This information included a *Background Analysis and Master Planning Report for Redevelopment* with three potential redevelopment options for the site. See **Appendix V** for a copy of this report. The FAA has conducted additional analyses of the data presented in the report and has revised the appropriate sections of the FEIS to disclose the potential impacts associated with future development on the Existing Site. As a result, the developer, not the Airport Sponsor or the FAA, would be responsible for completing the Development of Regional Impact (DRI), mitigation measures, permits, and approvals associated with any redevelopment of the Existing Site.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 5-5-134.**

101

**2-5-156** The Sponsor has not shown any need for runway extension during the planning period. This narrative does not address any specific impact, and no extension to runway 5-23 has been proposed.

**Response** See Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

**5-5-157** This section is redundant. See detailed comments embedded in the first iteration above.

**Response** Section 2.4.2.6 is intended to be a summary of constraints at the Existing Site.

**Response** Updated information regarding aviation activity at PFN is included in Section 1.7 of the FEIS.

The FAA prepares and updates its Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) regularly to reflect changing conditions and anticipated future conditions. The FAA has used the 2003 TAF for Panama City-Bay County International Airport as the basis for justification and analysis in this EIS. The FAA also decided to use the Airport Sponsor's forecast to perform technical analyses in those categories that are affected by aircraft operations (e.g. aircraft noise, air quality) to disclose the full range of potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project and the alternatives. Aviation demand forecasts are developed to represent overall trends in aviation activity—passenger and cargo enplanements and aircraft operations. Activity during a particular year may be above or below the forecast activity, based on specific short-term occurrences, such as the loss of service by a particular carrier. A review of the 2003 TAF indicates that 181,414 passenger enplanements were projected for 2004, where as the information provided by the commenter indicates that there were actually 93,000 operations at the Airport in 2004—or nearly 14 percent higher than projected. Despite these fluctuations in actual versus forecast activity, the FAA believes that the TAF remains a valid forecast for the basis of this EIS and that the Airport Sponsor's forecast provides the basis for assessing the full range of potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Project and the alternatives.

2-5-159 The operative concept is flexibility "over time", and FAA has implemented this objective by limiting the planning horizon to 20 years. The Sponsor's FAA-funded documentation (Feasibility Study, 2000; Site Selection Study, 2000) does not substantiate any need to enhance the existing facility beyond a 6800 foot runway during the planning period. At most, the studies indicate a small potential to operate narrow-body aircraft to nearby hubs, a potential that can be met with either no action or an action to provide a 6800 foot runway. If an 8400 foot runway is the objective, the project should be deferred until the need (not the desire) is evident within the 20-year planning period.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed project includes an 8,400 foot primary runway. Alternatives at both the Existing Site and West Bay site with a 6,800 foot primary runway are also analyzed in the EIS including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed by the commenter in Exhibits 1 and 2.

2-4-160 The Sponsor is accelerating the FAA planning regime only to obtain free land. This land is available under eminent domain at any future time, and the cost of land should not be allowed to distort objective aviation planning. Alternatively, if the cost of land is a constraint to future rational development, some present value analysis of this trade-off should be required - it is not self-evident.

**Response** Any evaluation of the cost of land is outside of the scope of this EIS.

2-3-161 FAA's PRIMARY responsibility is to develop a national aviation system, including airports, that is adequate to support aviation. Land use compatibility for FAA is predominantly a noise issue, and the noise studies in this DEIS show no noise impacts that require relocation to mitigate. Mitigating the modest noise from the onsite alternatives is not sufficient reason to incur the other environmental impacts from the relocation.

**Response** The FAA is required by NEPA to consider the environmental impacts of proposed federal actions, in this case the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project to relocate the existing PFN airport to the West Bay Site including an 8,400-foot primary runway. Any environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project at the West Bay site would be mitigated to the extent practicable.

2-3-162 The narrative above is not consistent with the content of this DEIS. FAA has not accepted the Sponsor's rationale for a runway exceeding 6800 feet, but has selected 8400 foot alternatives for evaluation. The onsite 8400 foot alternatives are not "reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practical" as required by NEPA. This EIS (and the Sponsor's project) should be limited to considering 6800 foot runway alternatives. If the Sponsor desires a minimum runway length of 8400 feet, the project should be deferred until the Sponsor provides data, based on the FAA Terminal Area Forecast or some equivalent methodology, supporting a need for the 8400 foot runway during the planning period.

**Response** The 8,400' runway is analyzed in the EIS because it is the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The 6800' runway length is also analyzed in the EIS, including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed in the commenter's Exhibits 1 and 2.

2-3-163 The existing airport meets all the goals except perhaps "expandable"; the Sponsor's preferred alternative fails to be "located at optimum site" and "... not more than 20 miles travel...".

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed site is located within 20 miles of the market area

**Hodges FEIS Response:** How is this determined – the Sponsor has offered no market area data except 1 week of passenger data from 1998.

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2-3-164 The FAA guidelines and practices for addressing RSA standards at existing facilities are both complex and flexible, spanning several documents. The key concept in these documents is "practicability", the idea that RSA improvements are not mandatory because imposition of mandatory standards would degrade the national aviation system disproportionately to the risk reduction. The Sponsor has never proposed any RSA improvements except relocation of the entire airport. If this became the benchmark of "practicability", it would be devastating to civil aviation, effectively shutting down many airports vital to the system. At PFN, objective risk analysis would probably show more risk from the extra road distance to the proposed airport than from the nonstandard RSA's. Both of these risks are minute and have no place in the analysis.

**Response** Comment noted.

2-3-165 Air Traffic Control is executed within a well-defined design of airspace and procedures, by personnel trained and certified to operate the ATC system. "Potential for conflicts" is not a defined term in the ATC regime, thus there is no rational basis to reduce or avoid it. No formal airspace study has been done for the various 2- and 3-airport alternatives. The Sponsor's consultants relied on the "Feasibility Study, 2000" and their own analysis to narrow the site selection to various runway alignments in the West Bay area. They generated pro forma TERPS (airspace design and approach/departure routes) for only the West Bay airport. Without a formal and comprehensive airspace analysis, it is not possible to conclude that any multi-airport configuration is decisively superior. The studies and interviews disclosed in this DEIS show that any of the alternatives discussed are well within the capabilities of routine airspace and ATC design and practice.

This federal need has not been established in this DEIS.

**Response** Air Traffic Control is not the sole method for reducing or avoiding conflicts. Other alternatives such as airport relocation are just as valid a method for reducing or avoiding airspace conflicts. The EIS did not generate any TERPS analysis and there is no requirement to do so.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Please read the comment again – I believe I said that ATC exists within a broader context. My point is that ONE configuration has been analyzed and the alternatives have been dismissed by waving this "Compatibility with Airspace Configuration/Utilization" jargon at it. The conclusion is both arbitrary and contradictory.

103

2-3-166 The FAA's own analysis contradicts the Sponsor's forecast and stated Purpose and Need. Including the 8400 foot alternative distorts the comparison of the alternatives that actually fulfill the FAA responsibility. If the FAA is to prudently allocate resources to the national aviation system and preserve the natural environment as much as possible, it must allow existing, more benign facilities to reach their full aviation potential before undertaking massively destructive actions prematurely. Even if new and larger facilities must ultimately be built, they will be required to comply with prevailing law and regulations in the future, and their incremental aviation capabilities will presumably justify their environmental cost. The Sponsor's preferred alternative moves the cost forward decades in time, decades that may allow entirely different solutions to emerge. It is already arguable that the Sponsor's project would be much more useful and less damaging if it were relocated to the north and postponed until aviation demand requires it.

**Response** This EIS only assesses those environmental impacts in detail that would result from the implementation of the initial development of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. Any subsequent development that would occur as demand warrants would be assessed in future NEPA documents.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** FAA has taken far too benign a view of the Sponsor's project, spending \$6 Million to essentially say "It makes no difference how we proceed, so we will proceed with the Sponsor." The facts and the disclosures in this FEIS cry out for a either a different preferred alternative or a Supplemental EIS to develop the real environmental impact. I again request a Supplemental EIS or a Programmatic EIS to analyze both the full impact of the Sector Plan and the redevelopment of the PFN site.

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2-4-167 FAA should not approve an ALP for more facilities than can be justified by its own analysis.

**Response** "Proposals to construct new runways, runway extensions, terminal buildings, or other major supportive development are shown on an ALP. Inclusion on the plan signifies that the proposed development has been identified by airport sponsors for planning purposes. It does not represent a commitment by the sponsor to implement the indicated development. FAA reviews planned development with respect to safety, efficiency, utility, and environmental impact. FAA's approval does not represent a commitment to provide financial assistance to implement the proposed plan." (FAA Order 5050.4A, Chapter 4, Paragraph 30, b.)



**3-1-168** FAA should re-examine the alternative of keeping the existing airport. The only reason given in this DEIS for eliminating the 2-civil-airport alternative, "reducing the potential for conflicts", has not been shown to be supported by any limitations of airspace or ATC procedure design or practice. Anecdotal opinions of the local military RAPCON have been misconstrued to favor the Sponsor's alternative. Variations in ATC workload that are within normal design and practice are to be expected, not cited as constraints.

The 2-civil-airport alternative, particularly if coupled with a deferred schedule for building the new airport, offers the only meaningful expansion of operations capacity while preserving a capable local community airport. It is also the low-cost alternative for achieving the Sponsors desired (not needed during the design period) runway length.

**Response** The reader is directed to Appendix D to the complete correspondence from Brigadier General Larry D. New, Commander of the 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing to Mr. Randy Curris. This correspondence in part states: "While the two airports have adjusted to these issues and work them safely on a daily basis, it is not a desirable situation to have commercial aircraft and high performance fighter aircraft in this close proximity."

The conflicts between traffic at the existing site are creating a situation that is not desirable for a major user of the airspace.

The Airport Sponsor's proposed project is not based on increasing capacity.

**Hodges FEIS Response: There is a vast difference between "Not Desirable" and "Requires Replacement". See 2-2-142.**

105

**3-1-169** The Sponsor's consultants have consistently chosen simplistic on-site alternatives that show no initiative to explore meeting aviation demand at the present site. FAA has independently determined that a 6800 foot runway is sufficient, yet the Sponsor persists in planning for 8400 feet minimum. Allowing the 8400 foot alternative creates a bias for the Sponsor's preferred alternative because a 6800 foot runway is relatively easy to develop at either site, whereas an 8400 foot runway at the existing site is not reasonable, feasible, prudent or practicable.

**Response** The reason an 8,400' alternative was analyzed at the Existing Site was to provide impacts to compare with the Sponsor's Proposed Project which included an 8,400' runway at the West Bay Site. On-site alternatives were designed prior to receipt of DEP letters dated October 24, 2003 and February 19, 2004, included in Appendix D, indicating permitting of such activity was unlikely. Alternatives in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS in Chapter 3.

**Hodges FEIS Response: The 8400 foot alternative at the existing site is not "reasonable, feasible, practical, or prudent" except in some fantasy world where costs and impacts don't exist. If an 8400 foot airport alternative to the West Bay site is crucial, it cannot be proposed at the existing site. I request a Supplemental EIS to consider a credible 8400 foot alternative.**

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**3-1-170** In this DEIS, both the "EMAS" alternative and the "declared distance" alternative were improperly designed, requiring filling of Goose Bayou, a method that was known to be unlawful.

**Response** The referenced alternatives were developed prior to receipt of FDEP letters.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 3-1-153.**

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**3-1-171** Exhibit 1 is a design for a 6800 foot runway with EMAS and no encroachment on Goose Bayou. Exhibit 2 is a design for a 6800 foot runway with EMAS, and the northwest EMAS built on a 475 foot pier into Goose Bayou. Either of these designs meets the aviation demand during the planning period without significant environmental impact. These designs should be refined and subjected to Level 2 and further detailed analysis.

**Response** The alternatives in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS.

3-I-172 The "dynamic" and "fluid" nature of the aviation industry works both ways, and the trend at Panama City has been to diminish rather than to grow. Air carrier operations are down 33% since inception of the "Feasibility Study 2000", air cargo on air carriers is less than 3 pounds per departure, and none of the FAA's or the Sponsor's forecasts has been met. Should growth accelerate, the aircraft mix will not change so quickly that facilities must be provided decades before they are needed. The Sponsor's preferred alternative is enormously expensive and disruptive, and it is being accelerated only to capture the donated land. If the Sponsor and the land donor are really pursuing aviation objectives, they should develop plans that reserve land without diverting funds from more urgent priorities of the state and the nation.

**Response** The donation of land and the development of specific uses of lands lies within the responsibility of local and state governments, and is outside the purview of the FAA.

3-I-174 This narrative arbitrarily and capriciously misrepresents the aviation capabilities of the Okaloosa county aviation complex. In fact, Okaloosa has THREE complementary airports: the joint use air carrier terminal at Eglin AFB, the Destin-Ft. Walton Beach GA airport, and the Sikes-Crestview GA airport. This cluster of airports provides far more aviation capacity than any of the alternatives presented for Bay County. Eglin-Okaloosa's passenger terminal has been expanded recently and the joint use lease has been liberalized to accommodate future growth. Destin-Ft. Walton and Sikes airports serve additional segments of GA for the region. Aviation development at VPS is by no means "essentially precluded". Meanwhile, the Sponsor is quite willing to COMPLETELY PRECLUDE aviation at PEN just for seed money.

**Response** Comment noted.

3-I-175 Although joint use at Tyndall AFB may be undesirable during the planning period, there is no doubt that Tyndall's airfield would fulfill the region's aviation needs should it become more accessible, especially in conjunction with retaining PEN. The missions of Tyndall are under constant review, and it now appears that the F-22 training mission will be curtailed. Should further curtailments ensue, joint use would actually benefit Tyndall by supplementing the military operations and sharing the operating cost. The narrative follows the pattern of minimizing the merits of competing options while basing the entire case for the preferred alternative on "potential" rather than "factual" needs.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed site meets purpose and need.

3-I-176 Under NEPA, FAA is not "limited to Bay County" for the selection of alternatives. The prior narratives about use of other airports ranges all the way to the adjacent service area at VPS in Okaloosa county. The Sponsor is a political subdivision of the State of Florida, and its jurisdiction can be expanded at will by the state legislature. In fact, the boundaries of the special district are being expanded by the in the [sic] 2005 legislative session to allow operation of facilities throughout Bay County and, by mutual agreement, in other counties. Any of several tracts of upland property can be assembled under public domain, if and when a new airport is justified. These tracts would be more benign environmentally and better located for interstate highway access.

**Response** The text in Section 3.2.7 has been revised for clarification.

3-I-177 In 1998, the public rejected the runway extension into Goose Bayou because 1) it was not needed (although the Sponsor had its usual rosy forecast) and 2) it was devastating to the environment. The tacit agreement not to oppose relocating the airport was based on the new airport 1) showing legitimate need and 2) avoiding environmentally sensitive sites. The Sponsor's proposal violates both tacit agreements.

**Response** In late 1998, the Airport Sponsor agreed to place any alternatives at the existing site that would impact Goose Bayou on hold. At the same time, the Airport Sponsor began to pursue the concept of an airport relocation. The Airport Sponsor continued to pursue relocation because it was determined to be justified and feasible as identified in the Feasibility Study.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** The Feasibility study did not find the project to be "justified", only technically feasible. The Sponsor could have saved FAA \$2.4 Million by just sending FAA a letter asking if it is possible to build a commercial service airport on 4,000 acres with suitable airspace.

108

**3-1-178** FAA should add upland sites to the alternatives under its obligation to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impact when a suitable alternative exists.

**Response** The FAA has conducted an evaluation of the reasonable range of alternatives to the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. As a result of the evaluation of alternatives, only those alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed project were carried forth in further detail and environmental analysis. The alternatives evaluations process is outlined in Chapter 3. A variation of the 6,800 foot runway alternative at the West Bay Site was developed that minimizes impacts to wetlands and is included in the FEIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response: None of the alternatives provide 8400 foot runways on an upland greenfield site. See 3-1-169.**

109

**3-1-179** This paragraph describes exactly why the West Bay site should not be developed as an airport by federal action. Since earlier narratives focused on only one objective of the NPIAS, this paragraph should expand the discussion. The West Bay site fails to meet the goals of:  
"... located at optimum sites..." and  
"... typical travel distances of 20 miles or less..."

The Sponsor has made no convincing argument that the new site is "optimum" to serve the region. Relocating 26 miles west of it's host community both deprecates existing airline service and exposes the new airport to increased competition for traffic by both VPS and FLH (see separate comments on the Sponsor's Updated Forecast). Simultaneously closing PFN further injures the host community by depriving eastern Bay County of a community GA airport with paved runways and instrument approaches. Every other city of any size in Florida has a capable community airport, either combined with air carrier service or as a separate GA airport.

**Response** The Airport Sponsor's proposed site meets the federal purpose and need as stated under Section 2.5 of the FEIS.

**3-1-180** None of the alternatives that extend into Goose bayou on fill meet the criteria of being reasonable, feasible, prudent and practicable. It is well established that filling Goose Bayou is both imprudent and unlawful, therefore not reasonable, feasible, or practicable. Exhibit 2 is an alternative for a 6800 foot runway with EMAS both ends and the northwest EMAS on a pier. Such a pier will meet the FAA criteria because it is much smaller and less intrusive than the alternatives offered in this chapter. Exhibit 1 is a 6800 foot runway with EMAS both ends that does not encroach on Goose Bayou. Either of these new alternatives will meet the FAA aviation criteria and have the lowest environmental and community impacts of any alternative. If these alternatives are not considered, the FAA has arbitrarily and capriciously avoided alternatives with the greatest avoidance and minimization of environmental impact during the planning period.

**Response** The alternatives in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS.

**4-18-181** Coordinating the rebuilding of both the airport and SR390 is quite reasonable in view of the major project already planned to 6-lane SR390 at the airport. Either bridging SR390 or re-aligning it can be accomplished at far less cost than tunneling. The choice of tunneling as the practicable alternative is another example of choosing the worst option in order to make the new airport look better. Re-alignment (after minimization of the displacement by using an EMAS design) is clearly the most desirable method of addressing SR390. Bridging is also feasible, since airline service can be maintained by regional jets using Runway 5-23. Airline service was operated this way intermittently during the 2001 rehab of Runway 14-32, and airline operations are DOWN 33% since 2001. The bridged runway grades can be reconciled on the geometry southeast of the 5-23 intersection with 14-32.

This comment is NOT a recommendation to bridge SR390, but an explanation of why bridging is superior to tunneling. Re-alignment is the obvious best alternative, if the State of Florida is not arbitrarily blocking consideration of reasonable on-site alternatives.

**Response** Comment noted.

**3-2-182** FAA continues to emphasize "flexibility and expandability" while disregarding that no real need for expansion beyond 6800 feet can be foreseen in an economic timeframe. Expansions that may occur 30, 50, or 100 years in the future are meaningless when discounted to present value.

**Response** The 8,400-foot runway is analyzed in the EIS because it is the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. The 6,800-foot runway length is also analyzed in the EIS, including the two 6,800-foot runway, on-site alternatives proposed in the commenter's Exhibits 1 and 2.

**3-2-183** Extending the runway to 6800 feet by splitting the extension into on-fill-to-northwest and on-grade-to-southeast is not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable because of the legal obstacles to filling Goose Bayou. Extending Runway 5-23 to 5000 feet is not required because the Sponsor and the FAA arbitrarily chose to design a 5000 foot crosswind runway at West Bay; replicating the existing 4888 feet is sufficient for the crosswind requirements. Only the alternatives to extend 14-32 southeastward should be considered. FAA has determined that alternatives using EMAS or declared distances will meet the aviation requirements during the planning period.

**Response** The FAA has conducted an evaluation of the reasonable range of alternatives to the Airport Sponsor's proposed project. As a result of the evaluation of alternatives, only those alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed project were carried forth in further detail and environmental analysis. The alternatives evaluations process is outlined in Chapter 3. The two EMAS alternatives included in the comments have been added to the alternatives and evaluation included in Chapter 3.

**3-2-184** Extending runway 14-32 to 8400 feet is not required during the planning period as established by FAA. Additionally, an 8400 foot southeastward extension is not practicable or feasible since it probably would require tunneling of SR390. No alternative that requires filling of Goose Bayou should be considered, for reasons discussed above. FAA has improperly allowed the Sponsor to evaluate both 8400 foot and 10400 foot on-site extensions in the "Feasibility Study 2000". This creates non-comparable "straw-man" alternatives that lead to the erroneous conclusion that a complete new airport is the low-cost alternative! The real alternatives are 1) limited on-site improvements or 2) deferring the entire project until the costs and benefits are comparable and within the same planning period.

**Response** The EIS analyzes the Airport Sponsor's proposal. Any studies conducted by the Airport Sponsor, such as the *Feasibility Study*, are presented in the EIS for disclosure purposes only.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** See 3-1-177 – in that response FAA relied on the "Feasibility Study 2000" as both justifying and finding technically feasible the Sponsor's project.

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**3-2-185** Design of the declared distances alternative should not be limited by the present alignment of SR390, and should not be designed on fill in Goose Bayou.

**Response** The two EMAS alternatives included in the comments have been added to the alternatives and evaluation included in Chapter 3.

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**3-2-186** The EMAS alternative for extending Runway 14-32 has been improperly designed by placing it on fill in Goose Bayou, which is not reasonable, feasible, prudent or practicable. Exhibits 1 and 2 suggest more appropriate EMAS alternatives that will minimize impact to Goose bayou while providing the least intrusive design for extension to the southeast. FAA should refine these designs and re-analyze them under the Level 2 and detailed impact criteria. Refined designs should also include the alternatives of an offset localizer and reducing the localizer separation, since the existing Runway 14-32 has only 445 feet of localizer clearance. The entire point of suggesting the EMAS alternative is that it MAXIMIZES the utility of the existing site, rather than penalizing the existing site unnecessarily, in order to favor a much more expensive and environmentally damaging alternative at West Bay.

**Response** Alternatives in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

**3-4-187** No on-site extensions of Runway 5-23 are reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable. These alternatives should be deleted from the analysis.

**Response** See Section 3.10 for findings of the Level 2 analysis.

**1-5-188** See previous comments on "optimization" of the airport site. The preceding paragraph minimizes the depreciation of air service to eastern Bay County by the Sponsor's preferred alternative. No passenger data has been shown to allocate the demand between the various communities, and Callaway, Tyndall AFB/Mexico Beach and eastern Gulf County have been ignored.

**Response** See Section 1.6.

**Hodges FEIS Response:** Section 1.6 says in effect "The service area is where the population is." It then relies on one week of passenger data that shows the traffic to be overwhelmingly from Bay County, WITHOUT IDENTIFYING WHICH AREA OF BAY COUNTY. It then goes on to speculate that the Sponsor's forecast (asserted over and over to be not used in this FEIS) says the new airport will alter the service area favorably. This flies in the face of the population demographics of Bay County (which is asserted to be the source of virtually all passengers). The new airport site is surrounded by thousands of acres of unpopulated pine plantations, and it will be decades (by the admission of the county planners and the landowner) before any significant population is developed. The Sponsor's project will deprecate air service to the population of Bay County (AKA the "Service Area") for many years. The only beneficiaries of a new airport are those involved in building it and those (a minority) for which it will be closer. Until some data is provided to the contrary, Section 1.6 is speculative, just like the Sponsor's project.

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**3-3-189** The Sponsor's "need" for an 8400 foot runway has not been established and should be excluded from this DEIS. The Sponsor's forecasts, while being highly uncertain, must be assumed to be optimistic. THESE FORECASTS, ONCE THE METHODOLOGY IS CORRECTED, DO NOT EVEN SHOW A NEED FOR A 6800 FOOT RUNWAY DURING THE PLANNING PERIOD! This is because the forecasts do not predict any operations that have not already been supported from the PFN airport. The most recent daily narrow-body service was by 737-200's that had longer take-off/runway requirements than the 737-800's predicted by the forecasts. Nothing in the Sponsor's forecast supports the prediction of 500 annual operations of 767 international charters. This entire project should be limited to Master Planning, with construction deferred until valid traffic forecasts show a need for new facilities.

**Response** The EIS analyses the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

**3-3-190** The Air Traffic Control system is designed to well-defined criteria and operated by trained and FAA-certified personnel. None of the "compatibility" criteria created for this DEIS are used in the ATC regime. In the absence of a formal airspace study of the various 2- and 3-airport configurations, it is not possible to rule out any of the alternatives. In other words, the pass/fail criteria should be "does the alternative meet the minimum requirements to be included in the ATC regime?", NOT "does the alternative add or reduce distance between airspace objects?" "Potential Conflicts" are irrelevant unless they violate ATC design and operating criteria. The Tyndall RAPCON staff apparently understands this distinction and takes the position that RAPCON has no preference as long as the configuration can be operated to ATC standards. FAA cannot create new ATC criteria for this DEIS that arbitrarily and capriciously favors the Sponsor's preferred alternative. Even using the inappropriate "compatibility" screen, FAA has not applied it fairly -- much is made of increasing distance from selected SUAs, and little is said of the West Bay airport's reduced proximity to the most restricted overland SUA, Eglin's 2914A.

**Response** Air Traffic Control is not the sole method for reducing or avoiding conflicts. Other alternatives such as airport relocation are just as valid a method for reducing or avoiding airspace conflicts. The conflicts between traffic at the two Airports are creating a situation that is not desirable for a major user of the airspace.

For an alternative to meet the airspace criterion, the protected airspace must not overlap any SUA and must not be limited by individual SUA areas to any greater extent than the airspace around PFN. The proposed airport's Conceptual Class D airspace has adequate lateral separation, approximately 3.0 nautical miles, from Restricted Area R-2914A and would not impact operations in Restricted Area R-2914A.

### Hodges FEIS Response: See 2-2-142.

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**3-3-191** Although the no-action alternative does not meet the criteria created for this DEIS, it actually does fulfill the FAA aviation forecast, and the credible portion of the Sponsor's Updated forecast. Neither FAA nor the sponsor has produced any data on the frequency and cost of payload restrictions caused by the 6304 foot runway at PFN on hot days. From the current traffic statistics, it is clear that cargo is not affected, as only 2 to 3 POUNDS of cargo is boarded per average airline departure, and the all-cargo aircraft are unconstrained. Cargo is a "space available" service and any cargo displaced from a departure is boarded on the first available departure without penalty. Passengers and their baggage are similarly accommodated, but financial or in-kind compensation is required. There is nothing in the record to show that the Sponsor has investigated these costs.

**Response** These issues are outside of the scope of the EIS and would more appropriately be addressed by the Airport Sponsor.

**3-3-192** The criterion of reducing "potential conflicts" is not appropriate. Even if this criterion is accepted, FAA has not applied it objectively. The West Bay airport moves all or part of civil aviation routes much closer to the most sensitive overland SUA in the complex, Eglin's 2914A. It is contradictory to enhance the Sponsor's alternative by accepting more separation from some SUA's and not penalizing the Sponsor's alternative for reducing separation from another, more restrictive SUA. A formal airspace analysis should be done. If any configuration can be developed with routes and facilities that meet the FAA minimum airspace and operating criteria, it should be considered equally reasonable, feasible, prudent, and practicable. Just as the existing PFN configuration is well within FAA ATC criteria, any other configuration within these design criteria should be equally acceptable. If new criteria or concerns for ATC workload are allowed to disqualify airspace configurations, numerous existing configurations must be addressed, and FAA does not propose to do so. This "compatible with current airspace configuration and utilization" criterion has been declared solely for this DEIS, and should not be allowed. A more appropriate airspace criterion would be "compatible with minimum ATC airspace and procedure design". If the 3-airport configuration meets such design criteria it must be carried to Level 2 analysis.

**Response** Air Traffic Control (ATC) is not the sole method for reducing or avoiding conflicts. Other alternatives such as airport relocation are just as valid a method for reducing or avoiding airspace conflicts. For an alternative to meet the airspace criterion, the protected airspace must not overlap any SUA and must not be limited by individual SUA areas to any greater extent than the airspace around PFN. The proposed airport's Conceptual Class D airspace has adequate lateral separation, approximately 3.0 nautical miles, from Restricted Area R-2914A and would not impact operations in Restricted Area R-2914A.

See response to comment 2-4-167.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 2-2-142.**

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**3-3-193** The 3-airport configuration was rejected at Level 1 only because of the "compatibility with the current airspace configuration and utilization" criterion, and the West Bay site has been accepted on the basis of this irrelevant criterion that has been contrived only for this DEIS. The discussion of the West Bay configuration's "superiority" under this criterion is inconclusive because it does not compare objective configurations. None of the 2- or 3-airport configurations has been shown to be unacceptable by objective design criteria.

**Response** The reader is directed to Appendix D to the complete correspondence from Brigadier General Larry D. New, Commander of the 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing to Mr. Randy Curtis. This correspondence in part states: "While the two airports have adjusted to these issues and work them safely on a daily basis, it is not a desirable situation to have commercial aircraft and high performance fighter aircraft in this close proximity."

The conflicts between traffic at the existing site are creating a situation that is not desirable for a major user of the airspace.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 2-2-142.**

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**3-3-194** The 8400 foot on-site alternative should not be proposed at all because FAA has independently determined that it is not necessary to serve aviation demand and the Sponsor has not provided credible data to support the Sponsor's "need" for this alternative. Including this alternative has the effect of penalizing the existing site by requiring it to support development that is not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable.

**Response** The FAA is required to analyze the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 3-1-169.**

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**3-3-195** Although this alternative passed Level 1 screening, it was improperly designed with a known deficiency under Level 2 analysis. This alternative should be redesigned to avoid filling Goose Bayou, and reconsidered under Level 2 and detailed analysis. It can be expected to be superior to the conventional 6800 foot on-site design.

**Response** The alternative was not designed with a known deficiency under Level 2. The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.

**3-3-196** Although this alternative passed Level 1 screening, it was improperly designed with a known deficiency under Level 2 analysis (filling of Goose Bayou and impacting seagrasses). This alternative should be redesigned by refining the designs in Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2, and re-analyzed under Level 2 and detailed analysis. It can be expected to have the lowest environmental and community impact of any alternative except the "no-action" alternative.

**Response** The alternative was not designed with a known deficiency under Level 2. The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.

**3-3-197** All extensions of Runway 5-23 should be rejected (or not included at all) because they are not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable in view of other clearly superior alternatives.

**Response** See Section 3.10 for findings of the Level 2 evaluation.

**3-3-198** The following alternatives should be added for Level 2 analysis:

- Separate commercial and GA airports

- this alternative was rejected using an inappropriate criterion.

The alternative should be evaluated by objective airspace design criteria and re-analyzed under Level 2 analysis. This alternative is the only alternative that offers true growth in aviation capacity, enhanced GA facilities, and competitiveness with Okaloosa County.

**Response** The separate airport alternative was properly analyzed and disclosed through Chapter 5.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See various previous comments on the improper analysis of the separate facilities alternative.**

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**3-3-199** The following alternatives should be rejected by Level 1 Analysis:

- all extensions of Runway 5-23
- the 8400 foot extension of Runway 14-32

**Response** The commenter does not provide any basis to reject the alternatives in Level 1, nor did the EIS find a basis to do so.

**3-4-200** This alternative was improperly designed because it was known to be unlawful to fill Goose Bayou. Therefore it was not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable.

**Response** The alternative was not designed with a known deficiency under Level 2. The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 3-1-169.**

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**3-4-201** This alternative was improperly designed because it was known to be unlawful to fill Goose Bayou. Therefore it was not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable.

**Response** The alternative was not designed with a known deficiency under Level 2. The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.



**3-4-202** This alternative should not have been considered at all because it has not been shown to be necessary by FAA or credible Sponsor analysis. Therefore it was not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable. Inclusion of this alternative is arbitrarily and capriciously prejudicial to objective comparison of the existing site with the West Bay site.

**Response** The alternative was not designed with a known deficiency under Level 2. The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.

**3-4-203** This alternative should not have been considered at all because it has not been shown to be necessary by FAA or credible Sponsor analysis. Therefore it was not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable. Inclusion of this alternative is arbitrarily and capriciously prejudicial to objective comparison of the existing site with the West Bay site. Furthermore, this alternative should not have been included because it was known to be unlawful because of filling Goose Bayou.

**Response** The EIS analyzes the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

**3-4-204** This alternative should not have been considered at all because it has not been shown to be necessary by FAA or credible Sponsor analysis. Therefore it was not reasonable, feasible, prudent, or practicable. Inclusion of this alternative is arbitrarily and capriciously prejudicial to objective comparison of the existing site with the West Bay site. Furthermore, this alternative should not have been included because it was known to be unlawful because of filling Goose Bayou.

**Response** The EIS analyzes the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

**3-4-205** This alternative was improperly designed and should be redesigned to avoid filling Goose Bayou. It is arbitrary and capricious to consider a conventional design of 6800 feet only to the southeast and not consider a "declared distances" design of 6800 feet only to the southeast.

**Response** This alternative was designed in accordance with FAA criteria. The alternative was planned to avoid the relocation and/or tunneling of SR 390.

**3-4-206** This alternative was improperly designed and should be redesigned to avoid filling Goose Bayou. It is arbitrary and capricious to consider a conventional design of 6800 feet only to the southeast and not consider an EMAS design of 6800 feet without filling Goose Bayou. Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2 are suggested alternatives for EMAS design. These designs should be refined and re-analyzed under Level 2. It is expected that either of these designs will have the lowest environmental and community impact of all alternatives.

**Response** The two additional alternatives proposed by the commenter have been added to the FEIS.

**3-4-207** No 8400 foot alternative should be analyzed because neither the FAA nor the Sponsor has shown a need for such an alternative during the planning period. Inclusion of 8400 foot alternatives arbitrarily and capriciously penalizes all alternatives that actually meet the need of aviation demand during the planning period. If an 8400 foot runway is the minimum desired (not needed) by the Sponsor, the project should be deferred until an objective need can be shown during the proper planning horizon.

**Response** The EIS analyzes the Airport Sponsor's proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

**Hodges FEIS Response: See 3-1-169.**

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**3-4-208** The following alternatives were improperly rejected by Level 2 screening, and should be re-designed and re-analyzed:

- extend Runway 14-32 to 6800 feet with declared distances
- extend Runway 14-32 to 6800 feet with EMAS

Both of these alternatives, if properly designed, have potentially the lowest environmental and community impact of any alternative that meets the FAA's or credible Sponsor's needs. Eliminating these alternatives because of knowingly deficient design is arbitrary and capricious.

**Response** The alternatives in Exhibits 1 and 2 have been added to the FEIS in Chapter 3.