

Appendix T ► Sample FAA Letter on Replacement Airport

U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Associate Administrator
for Airports

800 Independence Ave., S.
Washington, DC 20591

SEP 28 2004

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Administrator Blakey has asked me to respond to your letter of September 10 about your request for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance on replacement airports. Specifically, you asked the FAA to provide clear guidance on what would constitute a replacement airport for Buchanan Field Airport (CCR) by Contra Costa County (county).

As we have mentioned before, the FAA considers CCR to play a critical reliever airport role that benefits aviation in the county, the Bay area, and the national aviation system. With more than 580 based aircraft, CCR is one of the largest and most important reliever airports in the United States. The FAA would not consider a county request to close the airport unless we had first approved a replacement airport of equal or greater value to the aviation system, and that airport was completed and operating. In answer to your question, we would consider at least the following characteristics of a proposed replacement airport in determining whether the proposed site could replace CCR.

1. Sufficient airport property for airfield, aeronautical services, and landside public area: CCR is located on a site of 495 acres, and we would consider this size to be acceptable for a replacement site.
2. Design and construction of the new airport to current FAA airport design standards.
3. Capacity for more than 600 based aircraft and at least 300,000 operations yearly. (CCR currently has 580 based aircraft, but that number has been higher in the past.)
4. Air traffic control tower.
5. Runway system to provide capacity for 300,000 or more operations yearly, with alignment to cover locally encountered wind directions. Runway and other pavement strength and airfield design meeting standards for the largest aircraft using Buchanan Field. Runway configuration would be in accordance with then-current FAA design standards and would not duplicate the current CCR airfield layout. A configuration that met the capacity requirements would be as follows:

Two runways with the following characteristics:

- 150 x 5,000 feet;
- runway geometry suitable for Airport Reference Code C-II aircraft. The runway/taxiway centerline separation distances need evaluation for Airplane Design Group III standards;
- pavement strength: 60,000 pound single wheel, 90,000 pound dual wheel, and 140,000 pound tandem wheel;
- stopways;
- 50:1 slope, precision instrument approach, Instrument Landing System/Medium Intensity Approach Lighting System;
- Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI) at both ends; and
- runway to taxiway centerline separation distances, runway safety areas (RSA), obstacle free zones (OFZ), and object free areas (OFA) to be approved by the FAA's Airport District Office (ADO) for compliance with FAA standards.

One or two crosswind runways with the following characteristics and standards:

- 75 x 3,000 feet;
- runway geometry is suitable for Airport Reference Code B-II aircraft;
- pavement strength: 17,000 lb. single wheel;
- 20:1 slope;
- VASI at both ends; and
- runway to taxiway centerline separation distances, RSA, OFZ, and OFA to be approved by the FAA's ADO for compliance with FAA standards.

6. No obstacle penetration of any FAR part 77 surfaces for any runway or traffic pattern.
7. Qualification for an FAA airport operating certificate under 14 C.F.R. part 139.
8. Availability of published instrument approach procedures to the same or lower minimums as current CCR approaches. The airfield would need to meet terminal instrument approach procedures (TERPS) criteria for the published instrument approach procedures, as well as airport design, marking, and lighting requirements for instrument approach procedures.
9. Equal or better facilities than CCR to accommodate aircraft repair, storage, fueling, and related aviation services.
10. Location within Contra Costa County with the same utility as CCR to serve as a reliever airport for San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and Oakland International (OAK) as CCR. (CCR is within 25 nautical miles of SFO and 15 nautical miles of OAK.)
11. Equal or better access to local transportation services and infrastructure (including freeway access, rapid transit and bus service).

An FAA decision on a proposal to open a new airport would also trigger Federal environmental review and could require preparation of an environmental impact statement. In the review of an actual proposal, we may find other factors that affect the suitability of a replacement airport site. Therefore, the above list should be considered representative only and not a "checklist" for approval. Because we have not received a formal request for release from the county, we are unable to speculate on all of the considerations that might ultimately affect the Federal decision on a request to accept a particular replacement airport. Again, based on the current status of CCR, we continue to consider it highly unlikely that the FAA would concur in closing CCR.

If you or your staff need further help, please contact Mr. David Balloff, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

Catherine M. Wood
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Associate Administrator
for Airports

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