

# Master Plan Update

## Project Summary



The last Master Plan Update for Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) was completed in March 2004 and accepted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in April 2004. Many Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) noted in this Master Plan Update are at various stages of completion, which will affect the overall and long-term operations and capacities at RSW. Since 2004, several major construction projects were completed including the 27-gate Midfield Terminal Complex, I-75 Direct Connect, Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting facility, Terminal Access Road widening and Skyplex Boulevard. A noteworthy project anticipated as part of the former master plan study that is currently under construction includes the new Airport Traffic Control Tower. Other major infrastructure improvements slated in the near term are the Phase I Terminal Expansion Project, additional Skyplex non-aviation development and replacement of all passenger boarding bridges. Also, the design of projects such as the Rental Car Service Facility Relocation, and many others will begin. All these projects have or will significantly enhance the facility compared to how the airport existed during the previous master plan study.

However, as a new 20-year study period approaches, the list of projects previously identified in the 2004 Master Plan will soon be exhausted. For these reasons, a longer-term comprehensive assessment is warranted by a Master Plan Update to determine the projected future growth for RSW, the facilities needed to sustain that growth and the alternatives for satisfying projected demands through facility improvements. The feasibility and costs of alternatives must also be evaluated to determine the optimal long-term master plan for the airport. The proposed RSW Master Plan Update will establish a blueprint for the development of RSW and identify needed airside, landside and terminal improvements. This Master Plan Update will also identify the triggers for development based on projected passenger activity levels to maintain adequate level-of-service throughout the facilities while recognizing the unique seasonal-peaking characteristics of the airport. The consultant team will review previously prepared data and information, as well as perform new demand/capacity analyses to identify facility requirements in order to develop a complete integrated 20-year plan for RSW.

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its recovery directly impact the need for facilities, passenger and operations forecasts will be analyzed against industry trends and guidance. The airport served a total of more than 10.2 million passengers in calendar year 2019. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly interrupted air travel in March 2020, and as a result, passengers for calendar year 2020 dropped more than 41 percent to 5.9 million. However, RSW has shown strong month-over-month growth and will far exceed the FAA's 2020 Terminal Area Forecast projections in 2021. Off-peak enplanements are anticipated to continue to overshoot projections.

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The Master Planning process is guided by the FAA and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The FAA Advisory Circular (AC) No. 150/5070-6B “Airport Master Plans” provides guidance to airports regarding the preparation of master plans. Per the AC, the goal of a master plan is to provide the framework needed to guide future airport development that will cost effectively satisfy aviation demand, while considering potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts. While the process is very collaborative with many stakeholders, the AC states that master plans should meet the following objectives:

- Document the issues that the proposed development will address.
- Justify the proposed development through technical, economic and environmental investigation of concepts and alternatives.
- Provide an effective graphic presentation of the development of the airport and anticipated land uses in the vicinity of the airport.
- Establish a realistic schedule for the implementation of the development proposed in the plan, particularly the short-term Capital Improvement Program.
- Propose an achievable financial plan to support the implementation schedule.
- Provide sufficient project definition and detail for subsequent environmental evaluations that may be required before the project is approved.
- Present a plan that adequately addresses the issues and satisfies local, state and federal regulations.
- Document policies and future aeronautical demand to support municipal or local deliberations on spending, debt, land use controls, and other policies necessary to preserve the integrity of the airport and its surroundings.
- Set the stage and establish the framework for a continuing planning process. Such a process should monitor key conditions and permit changes in plan recommendations, as required.

The master planning process entails extensive inventory and validation of existing conditions, development of the aviation forecast with FAA and FDOT approvals, as well as identification of facility requirements to meet certain needs. The evaluation also involves environmental analysis, alternatives analysis and, ultimately, development of an Airport Layout Plan that is supported by a financially feasible Capital Improvement Program, with an achievable implementation schedule and phasing. The key elements of a master plan that the FAA reviews and formally approves are forecasts, selection of critical aircraft and the Airport Layout Plan (ALP). It is from these elements that the FAA makes a determination regarding eligibility of Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding for proposed development. It is critical the RSW Master Plan be current and correct to ensure funding eligibility for future development projects. The expected duration of the Master Plan Update process is expected to be two years and will involve public outreach.

