

# Chapter One: INTRODUCTION



**La Grande / Union County Airport**

**Airport Master Plan Update**

*FINAL – March 2018*

## Master Plan Update

This update to the 1998 La Grande / Union County Airport Master Plan was undertaken to reflect the numerous changes that have occurred in aviation and at the Airport. The purpose of this Master Plan Update is to provide a 20-year roadmap that takes into account these changes and identifies the necessary airport improvements to serve current and projected aviation demand, comply with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) design standards, and address airport issues identified by Union County (the Airport Sponsor), airport users, and other stakeholders.

Union County obtained and matched a grant from the FAA to fund this study. A portion of the matched funds were supplied by Oregon's *ConnectOregon* program. Union County has organized a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), representing Airport users and stakeholders, to participate in the planning process. In addition to five PAC meetings, and one County Commission Briefing, public involvement in the Master Plan Update includes a website to disseminate information and gather comments and questions, and five open houses for the general public.

The purpose of this first chapter of the Airport Master Plan Update (Plan) is fourfold:

- outline the planning process
- identify goals for the planning process and for the future development of the Airport
- summarize major issues that the Plan should address
- determine the Airport's current and future role within the system of airports

## Planning Process

The planning process and documentation will follow FAA Advisory Circular 150/5070 6B, *Airport Master Plans*. As this is a technical-style study, a list of FAA terms and acronyms is included as **Appendix A** for reference. The Master Plan Update study involves several tasks to be undertaken in an estimated 18-month study timeframe. A copy of this schedule, the study's Scope of Work, as well as other FAA correspondence is included in **Appendix B**.

Within this study, the following chapters will be prepared:

1. Introduction
2. Inventory and Data Collection
3. Aeronautical Activity Forecast
4. Facility Requirements
5. Airport Alternatives
6. Compliance Review
7. Recycling and Solid Waste Management Plan
8. Airport Layout Plan and Associated Drawings
9. Capital Improvement Plan

These chapters will be published in draft for review and comment throughout the planning process. Once review comments are incorporated into all draft chapters, a comprehensive report will be published for the County and FAA's review and approval<sup>1</sup>, with Final Report incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.

## Goals and Issues

A successful master planning process includes the early identification of airport goals and issues derived from discussions with a broad range of stakeholders including County staff, airport users, area businesses, and other interested parties. Involving diverse perspectives in the identification of goals and issues ensures that a more comprehensive list of topics are discussed. Further, communicating with stakeholders in the early stages on issues helps establish working relationships that will benefit the study process and, ultimately, the development plans.

### Goals

Goals for the Master Plan Update were a subject of the first PAC meeting held September 16, 2014. The common themes of PAC members' statements have been synthesized and are presented below. A copy of all PAC meeting summaries can be found in **Appendix C**.

- Enhancing safety and security
- Preserving/protecting investment
- Supporting economic growth
- Accommodating demand
- Complying with FAA grant assurances
- Within the boundary of the adjacent heavy industrial park, growth needs to be compatible with airport operations, this includes the potential for water impoundments and the attraction of hazardous wildlife.

When it is time to evaluate alternative layouts for airport development, in Chapter 5, these goals should be a component of the evaluation criteria.

### Issues

The following issues were identified at the first PAC meeting.

- Preservation of existing Airport Reference Code. This determines - among other things - runway width, length, safety area dimensions.<sup>2</sup>
- Wise growth management
- Cohesive development with area economics and industry
- All weather accessibility

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<sup>1</sup> FAA only reviews and approves the Aeronautical Activity Forecasts and the Airport Layout Plan Drawings.

<sup>2</sup> While this was stated as an issue at the PAC meeting, actual use of the Airport – as documented within the Master Plan – will guide decisions for the appropriate reference code.

- Partnership with the US Forest Service
- Maintenance and expansion of existing facilities
- Environmental considerations
- Compliance with FAA Grant Assurances
- Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) testing – recently approved at Pendleton (KPDT). What are the potential impacts for La Grande / Union County Airport?
- Partnership with Oregon Department of Forestry (Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) operations)
- Helicopter and fixed wing development
- Potential for rappel crews
- Through-the-fence (TTF) helicopter operations area
- Seasonal operations – long-term goals and ability to meet demand. Where should development occur?
- The impact of Next Generation air tankers at the Airport
- Flight training and additional services
- Avionics maintenance, possibly on demand
- What are the future fuel needs and where should fuel farm be located?
- Potential for future self-fueling
- Fencing for security and wildlife control. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) does annual onsite review.
- Fire protection services should be a consideration for new development.
- Helicopter flight patterns, training areas, etc. Would there be a need for separation in the future?
- Weed control on airport, especially around helicopter operations.
- Seasonal housing/RV parking needs to be addressed and must be airport-related, specifically for fire crews.

To expand, confirm, and refine the above list of issues, a questionnaire (**Appendix D**) was distributed in the Fall/Winter of 2014. To date, 15 completed surveys have been received. The most frequent comment regarding suggested improvements was improved instrument approach capability, followed by improved weather reporting and lighting for Runway 16-34. All survey comments are listed below.

- Improved instrument approach, with lower minimums, such as Instrument Landing System (ILS) or Localizer Performance with Vertical Guidance (LPV)
- Improved weather reporting and Terminal Aerodrome Forecast (TAF)
- Runway 16-34 lighting
- Improved water pressure for aircraft washing
- Avionics shop
- Non-ethanol fuel
- Self-service fueling
- Operational beacon
- Keep pavement areas free of debris

- County should email bills to reduce costs
- Service at Fixed Base Operator (FBO) is terrific

If any additional surveys are returned, those responses will be incorporated into this document, as appropriate.

## Airport Role Analysis

This section identifies the current role of the Airport and analyzes whether or not that role should change in the future. First, the current role assignment for the Airport within the national and state system of airports is described. Then, the Airport's role within the regional system of airports is examined in depth, including analysis of other airports in the region. Finally, the appropriate future role of the Airport is recommended.

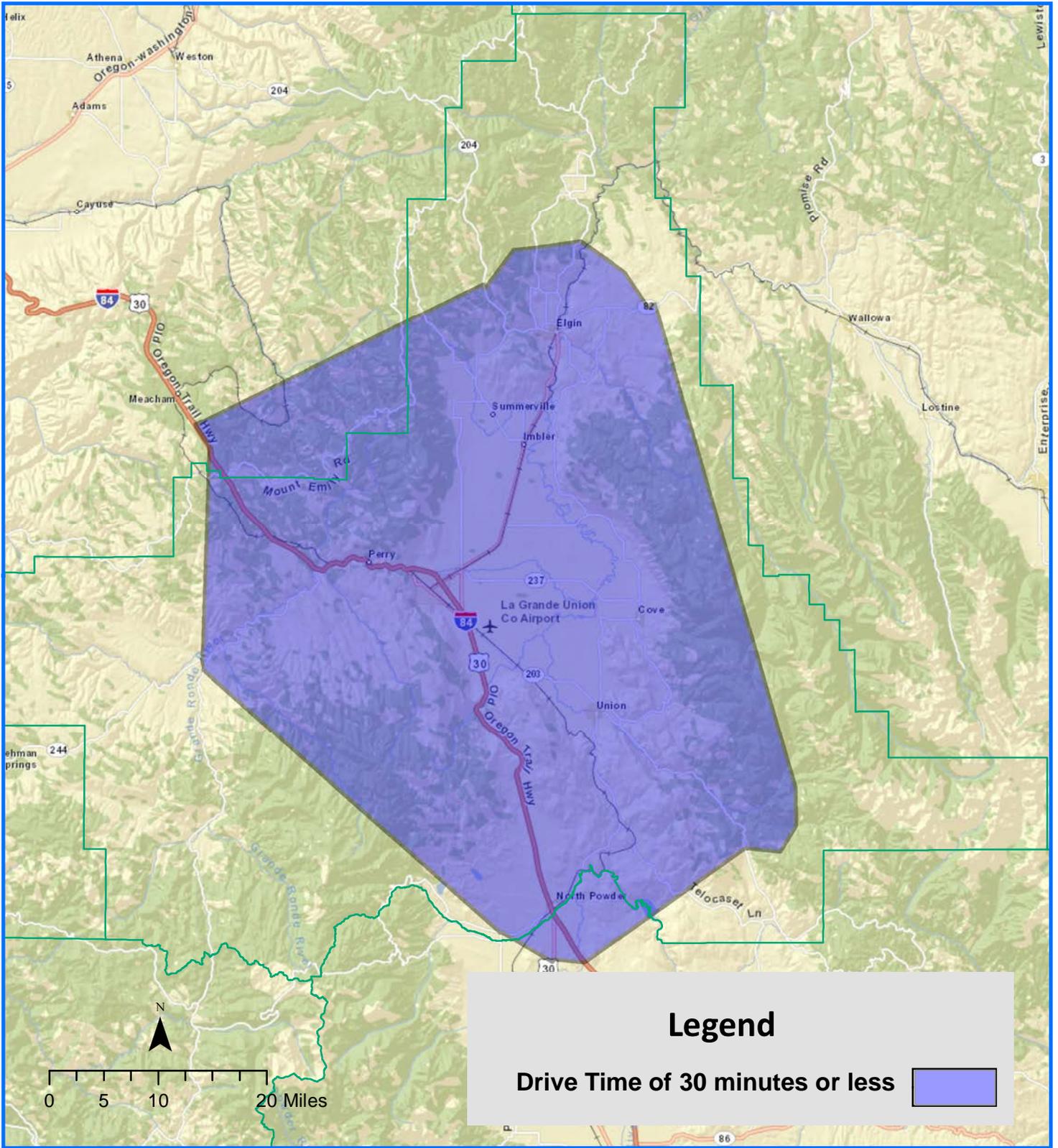
## National System Role

The Airport is identified by the FAA as one of 2,553 General Aviation (GA) facilities nationwide, as of 2014, and is included within the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). More specifically, the Airport is classified as a Regional GA airport. GA airports do not have scheduled passenger service. There are several criteria allowing an airport to be included in the NPIAS; however, the general criteria are that the airport has at least 10 based aircraft and is located at least 20 miles (30 minutes drive time) from another NPIAS airport. With 57 based aircraft, the Airport is well over the based aircraft threshold. The closest airport is Baker City Municipal, which is approximately 35 road miles south, with a drive time of approximately 35 minutes (see **Exhibit 1A**). Both of these NPIAS criteria are met for the La Grande / Union County Airport.

Since it is in the NPIAS, the Airport is eligible to receive Federal grants under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Under the current AIP, Federal grants cover up to 90% of Airport eligible costs. Eligible costs include planning, development, and noise compatibility projects that are in the approved Master Plan and on the Airport Layout Plan. As part of receiving AIP grants, Union County must accept all conditions and obligations under the FAA grant assurances. In general, such assurances require the County to operate and maintain the Airport in a safe and serviceable condition, not grant exclusive rights, mitigate hazards to airspace, and use airport revenue properly.

## State System Role

The *Oregon Aviation Plan 2007 (OAP 2007)* classifies the Airport as a Category III, Regional General Aviation Airport. A Category III airport supports mostly twin- and single-engine aircraft and may also accommodate occasional business jets, and fulfill a regional transportation need according to the *OAP*. Key performance criteria associated with these airports are an FAA Airport Reference Code (ARC) of at least B-II, minimum runway size of 4,000 feet by 75 feet, a non-precision instrument approach, and full



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**Service Area  
Map**

**EXHIBIT 1A**

service FBO(s)<sup>3</sup>. The La Grande / Union County Airport meets and/or exceeds these minimum standards to qualify as a Regional GA Airport.

### Regional System Role

The Airport serves an important role in the region by accommodating 57 based aircraft and an estimated 16,000 operations – a large portion of which are providing a public service of fire management in an economy largely dependent upon forestry products and outdoor recreation. In comparison, nearby Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton (Category I, Commercial Service) and Baker City Municipal (Category III, Regional GA) have a combined total of 85 based aircraft and nearly 31,000 operations annually. A similar feature of these three airports is their access to Interstate 84, which is the main artery serving ground transportation in Eastern Oregon. **Table 1A** provides a comparison of the facilities and services at these airports, and other area airports, within approximately 45 nautical miles from the Airport.

According to the *2014 OAP* update the Airport is a significant economic engine for the region. The report estimates a total direct effect from on-airport activities and visitor spending to be approximately \$26.7 million. See **Appendix E** for copies of the *2007* and *2014 OAP* individual reports for the Airport.

Of the 15 surveys returned, all but one respondent reported use of the Airport primarily for business activity. Two of the business-related operators do not base their aircraft at the Airport, all others are based either on-airport or access the Airport via through-the-fence.

### Airport Role Conclusions and Recommendations

The La Grande / Union County Airport's facilities, services, and activity align with its current designated role in the *OAP 2007* as a Regional GA Airport. Activity by small single-engine and some multi-engine aircraft represents a consistent, year-round presence at the Airport. Privately operated fire management aircraft operate extensively at the Airport during the peak fire season months, to provide a public service in the surrounding wilderness areas and national forests. Activities by large multi-engine aircraft are more difficult to predict, as demand is dependent upon the fire season; however, the Airport has facilities and services to accommodate those activities. Subsequent chapters will further describe the projected aviation growth and future improvement to better serve the demand.

The recommendation is to maintain the current role designation of Regional GA Airport at the La Grande / Union County Airport.

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<sup>3</sup> A full-service FBO is a business that provides a wide range of services, such as fuel sales, aircraft repair and maintenance, hangar and tiedown rentals, aircraft charters and rentals, flight training, and amenities for pilots and passengers.

**Table 1A. La Grande / Union County Area Airports within 45 Nautical Miles**

<b>Airport, Acreage, OAP Role</b>	<b>Distance (nm) from LGD</b>	<b>Paved Runways</b>	<b>Lighting, Nav aids</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Based Aircraft &amp; Operations</b>
<b>La Grande / Union County</b> 640 <i>Cat III, Regional GA</i>	-	Rwy 12-30 6,260' x 100' Rwy 16-34 3,876' x 60'	Rotating Beacon, MIRL (Rwy 12-30 only), Lighted Wind Indicator, PAPI, RNAV (GPS), NDB	AvGas, Jet A, AWOS, Major A&P Service	57 aircraft 16,000 ops
<b>Baker City Municipal</b> 398 <i>Cat III, Regional GA</i>	28 nm S	Rwy 08-26 3,670' x 140' Rwy 13-31 5,085 x 100' Rwy 17-35 4,359' x 75'	Rotating Beacon, MIRL (Rwy 13-31 only), Lighted Wind Indicator, PAPI, VASI, RNAV (GPS), VOR/DME	AvGas, Jet A, AWOS, Major A&P Service	35 aircraft 16,200 ops
<b>Enterprise Municipal</b> Unknown <i>Cat V, Remote Access/Emergency Services</i>	30 nm E	Rwy 12-30 2,850' x 50'	Rotating Beacon, LIRL, Lighted Wind Indicator	AvGas	15 aircraft 5,375 ops
<b>Joseph State</b> 103 <i>Cat IV, Local GA</i>	32 nm E	Rwy 15-33 5,200' x 60'	Rotating Beacon, MIRL, Lighted Wind Indicator, PAPI, REIL, AWOS	AvGas	10 aircraft 3,850 ops
<b>Eastern Oregon Regional – Pendleton</b> 2,273 <i>Cat I, Commercial Service</i>	43 nm NW	Rwy 07-25 6,301 x 150' Rwy 11-29 5,581' x 100'	Rotating Beacon, Lighted Wind Indicator, MALSR, ODALS, HIRL, REIL, AWOS, ILS, LOC/DME, RNAV (GPS), VOR	ATCT, AvGas, Jet A, Major A&P Service	50 aircraft 14,638 ops
A&P = Airframe & Powerplant AWOS = Automated Weather Observing System ATCT = Air Traffic Control Tower DME = Distance Measuring Equipment GPS = Global Positioning System MALSR = Medium Intensity Approach Lighting System with Runway Alignment Indicator Lights HIRL/MIRL = High/Medium Intensity Runway Lighting			ODAL = Omnidirectional Approach Lighting Operation = Takeoff or Landing PAPI = Precision Approach Path Indicator REIL = Runway End Identifier Lights RNAV = Area Navigation VASI = Visual Approach Slope Indicator VOR = Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Range Station		

Source: FAA Airport Master Records (Form 5010) and OAP 2007.