

Buchanan Field Airport Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is a master plan and why is community input important?

A master plan acts as a blueprint for future use and development on the airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) suggests updating a master plan every five to ten years. The current Buchanan Field Airport Master Plan is more than fourteen years old and the update will include several elements such as examination of how the airport can accommodate future aviation needs, the type of aircrafts and businesses that the airport can support, a noise study and a business plan. Community involvement is important to best ensure that any future development is compatible, to the greatest extent possible, with the needs of local residents, area businesses, the community-at-large, and the aviation transportation system.

2) Why are you doing a master plan when they are still considering alternate uses for the airport?

As mentioned above, the FAA requires an airport to update their master plan within specified time frames. The existing Buchanan Field Airport Master Plan is dated and must be updated per FAA requirements. In addition, even if there is a decision to relocate the airport, it would take minimally ten and, more likely, fifteen to twenty years for that relocation process to be complete. The airport would continue to function in its current capacity until it is relocated and, therefore, must maintain a current master plan for those aviation activities.

3) Who is paying for the master plan?

The master plan process will cost a total of \$1.2 million. Of this total, ninety percent (90%) is provided by the Federal Government (FAA), five percent (5%) from the State and the remaining portion is funded by the Airport Enterprise Fund. There is no County General Fund money used for this project.

4) What is the airport enterprise fund?

The airport enterprise fund derives its revenue from rental of the County-owned aircraft hangars and tie-downs, lease of aviation and non-aviation (i.e., commercial) buildings/facilities, and lease of land for private development/use. For example, the Airport leases the land where the Buchanan Fields Golf Course, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Sam's Club, Sportmart, Caffino, Taco Bell, Lithia Dodge and other businesses are located around the airport.

5) How can I get involved?

All community input will be considered in the development of the master plan. We have set-up various ways to receive public input including a Steering Committee that meets regularly, public meetings at nine key points in the master plan process, and written (email or mail) and/or verbal comments to Airport staff. We have also set-up a public information outreach system that includes information repositories at local libraries and a website (www.buchananfield-byronairports.org) that provides up-to-date information and key master plan technical documents.

6) What is the Part 150 Noise Study?

Part 150 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), “Airport Noise Compatibility Planning,” sets standards for airport operators to use in documenting noise exposure and for establishing programs to minimize noise-related land use incompatibilities. The Part 150 process includes two principal elements; (1) A Noise Exposure Map (NEM) and (2) A Noise Compatibility Program (NCP).

A Noise Exposure Map is a scaled, geographic depiction of an airport, its noise contours, and surrounding area developed to address impacts of the forecasted aviation activities included in the master plan.

The Noise Compatibility Program is an examination and analysis of the noise impacts created by the operations of an airport, the costs and benefits associated with alternative noise reduction techniques, and areas of noncompatibility and consideration of ways to reduce noncompatible uses.

7) What can the airport do to stop noise?

Buchanan Field Airport has a Noise Ordinance that limits many types of activities from the airport, such as banner towing, formation flying, ultralight aircraft, etc. The airport also has restrictions on training operations from 10:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. Monday through Friday. That restriction extends to 8:00 a.m. on weekends and holidays. Buchanan Field also restricts louder, older jets from operating at the airport, unless involved in an emergency.

As far as imposing new noise restrictions, there are overlapping responsibilities for the regulation of airports and aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration has exclusive authority to control the operations of aircraft both in the air and on the airport taxiways and runways. As such, any noise rules imposed must be deemed reasonable, nonarbitrary and not unjustly discriminatory to satisfy constitutional and grant assurance standards. The Airport will use the Part 150 Noise Study to gather input from the community and the pilots to strengthen our Noise Management Program which includes preferential runways for landing and departing to lessen the exposure to aircraft noise for all airport neighbors. (Note: additional information on this subject is available on the website under “Fact Sheets”)

8) Why can't we close the airport at night?

The County has specific grant assurances from the FAA which establish policies and procedures for airport flight operations, as with all public airports. Buchanan Field Airport, however, adopted a noise abatement ordinance in 1988 to help minimize conflict with aviation activities and the surrounding neighborhood. We are fortunate that the Buchanan Field Airport Noise Program is still in effect as it predated the 1990 Congress enacted Airport Noise and Capacity Act (ANCA).

The Noise Act (ANCA) and its implementing regulations, FAR Part 161, sets onerous requirements on airports that must be satisfied prior to implementing certain types of noise rules. The Noise Act and Part 161 apply to any regulation, lease provision or other mandatory restriction or requirement limiting the operation of Stage 2 or Stage 3 aircraft. In order to restrict access to an airport, the reasoning for that restriction must be judged as being reasonable, non-arbitrary and not unjustly discriminatory. If an airport adopts restrictions subject to ANCA and Part 161 without following the regulations, it may lose eligibility for federal grant funding. Further, the FAA considers the airport's intent and motivation for imposing a restriction. If the FAA believes that an airport is imposing a restriction that is motivated by, or intended to control noise, the FAA may conclude that the restriction is subject to the Noise Act and Part 161.