Federal Aviation Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
and
Record of Decision (ROD)

For the San Antonio Airspace Modernization Project (SAT AMP)

February 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

This document serves as the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Finding of No Significant Impact and Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) for the Draft Environmental Assessment for the San Antonio Airspace Modernization Project (SAT AMP), which is made Final by striking all relevant and timeframe references to "Draft" and replacing with "Final," amending Appendix B to reflect release of the Draft EA, and striking Appendix J for lack of public comment, with an effective date of February 2023, attached hereto and incorporated by reference. The FONSI/ROD has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 4321 et seq.); implementing regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), parts 1500-1508); and FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, effective July 16, 2015 ("FAA Order 1050.1F"). This FONSI/ROD is also used by the FAA to demonstrate and document its compliance with the several procedural and substantive requirements of aeronautical, environmental, programmatic, and other statutes and regulations that apply to FAA decisions on proposed actions. This FONSI/ROD is based on the information and analysis contained in the Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA) dated February 2023.

Furthermore, this FONSI/ROD:

- Documents the FAA's finding that the SAT AMP will not have significant environmental impacts and explains the basis for that finding; and,
- Approves certain Federal actions associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action. Implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no airport-related development, land acquisition, construction, or other ground disturbance activities.

In approving the SAT AMP, the FAA has considered 49 U.S.C. § 40101(d)(4), which gives the FAA various responsibilities and holds it accountable for controlling the use of navigable airspace and regulating civil and military operations in that airspace in the interest of safety and efficiency. Additionally, consideration has been given to 49 U.S.C. § 40103(b)(2), which authorizes and directs the FAA Administrator to prescribe air traffic rules and regulations governing the flight of aircraft, for the navigation, protection, and identification of aircraft, and the protection of persons and property on the ground, and for the efficient utilization of the navigable airspace, including rules as to safe altitudes of flight and rules for the prevention of collisions between aircraft, between aircraft and land or water vehicles, and between aircraft and airborne objects.

Furthermore, the FAA has given careful consideration to the aviation safety and operational objectives of the SAT AMP in light of the various aeronautical factors and judgments presented; the need to enhance efficiency of the national air transportation system; and the potential environmental impacts of the Project.

II. BACKGROUND

The FAA is in the process of implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), the FAA's plan to modernize the National Airspace System (NAS) through 2025. NextGen is a complex program intended to develop and implement new technologies, while integrating existing technologies and adapting the air traffic management system to a new way of operating. NextGen represents an evolution from an air traffic control system that is a primarily ground-based system to a system that is satellite-based and will allow the FAA to guide and track air traffic more precisely and efficiently. To achieve NextGen goals, the FAA is implementing new Area Navigation (RNAV) and Required Navigation Performance (RNP) air traffic routes and instrument procedures (RNAV Standard Instrument Departures (SIDs), Standard Terminal Arrival Routes (STARs), and Standard Instrument Approach Procedures (SIAPs) around the country that use emerging technologies and aircraft navigation capabilities. The implementation of RNAV and RNP procedures enables the use of other Performance Based Navigation (PBN) technology in the NAS, and facilitates more efficient procedures such as Optimized Profile Descents (OPD). The FAA intends to design and implement RNAV procedures that will take advantage of the technology readily available in the majority of aircraft as part of the airspace modernization initiative. The airspace modernization initiative specifically addresses airspace congestion, airports in close geographical proximity, and other limiting factors that reduce efficiency in complex multi-airport and varied air traffic airspace. Efficiency is improved by expanding the implementation of RNAV-based standard instrument procedures and connecting the routes defined by the standard instrument procedures to high and low altitude RNAV routes. Efficiency would also be increased by taking advantage of RNAV to maximize the use of the limited airspace in congested airspace environments.

The SAT AMP is intended to address specific issues related to the efficient flow of traffic in and out of the San Antonio region.

III. PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action consists of development of standard air traffic procedures to enhance efficient handling and movement of air traffic, while maintaining safety, into and out of the San Antonio regional airspace. The Proposed Action would include 19 procedures:

- 5 new/amended RNAV SIDs
- 7 new/amended RNAV STARs
- 3 existing conventional SIDs
- 4 existing conventional STARs

The Proposed Action includes 12 SIAPs and would maintain seven existing conventional procedures.

The Proposed Action considered in this study would include the implementation of modernized RNAV SID and STAR procedures that would improve existing procedures. The primary components of the Proposed Action are, to the extent possible, redesign standard instrument arrival and departure procedures to more efficiently serve the SAT Study Airports and to (1) Improve the flexibility in transitioning traffic between en route and terminal area airspace and between terminal area airspace area and the runways; (2) Improve the segregation of arrivals and departures in terminal area and enroute airspace; and, (3) Improve the predictability in transitioning traffic between enroute and terminal area airspace and between terminal area airspace area and the runways. The optimized RNAV procedures would also provide vertical navigation, allowing the aircraft to climb to or descend from cruise altitude into the San Antonio area with reduced pilot-controller communications and fewer inefficient level flight segments.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not require any ground disturbance or development of facilities, nor would it require local or state action. The Proposed Action consists only of procedural changes intended to improve operational efficiency, increase flight path predictability, and reduce required controller-pilot voice communication. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not increase the number of aircraft operations in the San Antonio airspace when compared to the No Action Alternative. The target date for starting implementation of the SAT AMP procedures would be 2023.

IV. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The SAT AMP consisted of a Performance Based Navigation (PBN) Design Team phase, which analyzed the San Antonio operational challenges and explored opportunities to optimize air traffic procedures therein. Although RNAV based SIDs and STARs have been in effect in the San Antonio for over 10 years, the PBN Design Team concluded that these procedures can be improved to increase efficient use of the airspace. In particular, the PBN Design Team found that under current conditions, most of the STARs serving SAT do not provide for a landing aircraft to redirect from one assigned runway to another prior to landing in what is called a “runway transition” procedure. This requires increased communication between controller and pilot. Consequently, less-precise flight paths may result due to the time it takes the controller to issue an instruction to the pilot and for the pilot to read the instruction back to the controller for confirmation before the instruction can be executed. As a result, flight route predictability is reduced, as is efficient use of the airspace. In addition,

the PBN Design Team determined that current departure traffic flows rely on vectors for traffic departing to the north and east, increasing task complexity. In addition, the current departure flows have inefficient routes and altitudes. Furthermore, some arrival and departure flight paths intersect, requiring controllers to direct pilots to vector/level off to maintain adequate vertical and/or lateral separation between aircraft The PBN Design Team materials reflect three key factors as causes of inefficiencies in the San Antonio region:

- Lack of predictable standard routes defined by the need for additional RNAV arrival and departure procedures connecting to/from the en route airspace and a need for runway transitions.
- Complex converging and dependent arrival and departure route procedure interactions.
- Lack of flexibility in the efficient transfer of traffic between the en route and terminal area airspace.

These three factors demonstrate the need for the Proposed Action.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to take advantage of the benefits of PBN by modernizing RNAV procedures that will help improve the efficiency of the airspace in the San Antonio region. The Proposed Action would address the three key factors causing the inefficiencies in the airspace and improve the efficiency of air traffic operations through improved flexibility in transitioning aircraft, enhanced segregation between aircraft, and improving the predictability of air traffic flow. Modernizing RNAV procedures will also comply with direction issued by Congress in the Modernization and Reform Act of 2012.

V. ALTERNATIVES

The following provides a summary of the alternatives development process and alternatives considered.

Identification and Evaluation of Potential Alternatives - Developing alternatives for the SAT AMP was a multi-step process that began with the request of instrument flight procedures (IFPs) to be improved in April of 2015. A preliminary PBN Design Team defined operational issues related to improving efficiency, reducing complexity, and improving predictability in the (then unnamed) SAT AMP in March of 2016 and recommended conceptual designs for procedures that would address these issues. The recommended procedures were reported to the PBN Design Team for further consideration and procedure development. The PBN Design Team designed individual procedures based on the evolving recommendations and captured input from regional stakeholders. Each procedure that the PBN Design Team designed had to meet several design criteria as well as the project's purpose and need. The purpose and need for the Proposed Action is to address existing inefficiencies with SAT AMP aircraft instrument arrival and departure procedures. The FAA rejected individual procedures if, on their own merit, they did not meet the purpose and need of the project. Following the design process, the PBN Design Team held a series of public outreach meetings to introduce the eventual SAT AMP to relevant organizations, communities, and officials via web based presentations to gather comments on the proposed designs. The feedback received from this community involvement was instructive and considered in the alternative development process. The Proposed Action alternative that this EA evaluates is a package of many individual, interrelated procedures combined into one alternative. These procedures were considered and evaluated individually and in combination

with one another to determine whether the alternative would meet the project's purpose and need. The FAA considered multiple versions of each air traffic procedure. Several versions were not carried forward as they failed to meet the purpose of the project. The following sections describe the alternatives development process the FAA used to create and evaluate a series of procedures that, when employed together, would enhance the air traffic efficiency to the San Antonio region.

Alternatives Analyzed in the EA – In addition to the Proposed Action (described above), the EA also analyzed the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the FAA would maintain 14 existing arrival and departure procedures for the San Antonio region. The 14 currently published SIDs and STARs in the San Antonio region serving the SAT AMP Study Airports that comprise the No Action Alternative include:

- 4 RNAV STAR
- 3 RNAV SIDs
- 3 conventional (i.e., non-RNAV) SIDs
- 4 conventional (i.e., non-RNAV) STARs

The existing conventional and RNAV arrival and departure procedures would remain as is, subject to minor, periodic reviews and revisions in response to changes in the operational environment (i.e., magnetic variation changes; obstruction surveys, and changes in FAA Air Traffic Control regulations). The No Action Alternative would not implement the specific procedures designed as part of the SAT AMP project.

The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the project. It would not improve the efficiency of the airspace nor address any of the three key causal factors for airspace inefficiency. Furthermore, the No Action Alternative would not meet the congressional mandate to implement additional RNAV procedures.

VI. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The General Study Area for this project includes the geographic area in which natural resources and the human environment are potentially affected by the Proposed Action and its reasonable alternative. Paragraph 14.5e of Appendix A to FAA Order 1050.1F requires consideration of impacts of airspace actions from the surface to 10,000 feet AGL if the study area is larger than the immediate area around an airport or involves more than one airport. Furthermore, policy guidance issued by the FAA Program Director for Air Traffic Airspace Management states that for air traffic project environmental analyses noise impacts should be evaluated for proposed changes in arrival procedures between 3,000 and 7,000 feet AGL and departure procedures between 3,000 and 10,000 feet AGL for large civil jet aircraft weighing over 75,000 pounds.

In developing the General Study Area, the FAA collected radar data from flight paths in the San Antonio region. The General Study Area was designed to capture all flight paths identified in the radar data collected for the preparation of the EA as well as the designed Proposed Action routes out to the point at which 95 percent of aircraft are at or above 10,000 feet AGL for departures and at or above 7,000 feet AGL for arrivals, accounting for the terrain in and around the San Antonio region. The lateral extent of the General Study Area was concisely defined to focus on areas of traffic flow.

The resulting General Study Area includes all or portions of 32 counties in Texas.

The SAT AMP General Study Area encompasses one major airport:

- San Antonio International Airport (SAT)

The SAT AMP General Study Area also includes the following satellite airports whose air traffic is also served by the proposed procedures while having operational levels that met FAA criteria defined in Order 1050.1F:

- Kelly Field (SKF)
- New Braunfels National Airport (BAZ)
- Randolph Air Force Base Airfield (RND)

The EA refers to the one major and three satellite airports collectively as the Study Airports.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The FAA analyzed the potential environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the Proposed Action as well as the impacts associated with the No Action Alternative on all relevant environmental impact categories specified in FAA Order 1050.1F. The FAA evaluated both alternatives for conditions in 2023, the first year of implementation of the optimized air traffic procedures under the Proposed Action, and 2028, five years after expected implementation of the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action would not involve land acquisition, physical disturbance, or construction activities and, therefore, would not affect certain environmental impact categories. The following environmental resource categories would remain unaffected because either the resource does not exist within the General Study Area or it would not be affected by the activities associated with the Proposed Action. The unaffected resource categories or sub-categories include:

- Coastal Resources
- Farmlands
- Biological Resources (including Fish and Plants only)
- Water Resources (including Wetlands, Floodplains, Surface Waters, Groundwater, and Wild and Scenic Rivers)
- Hazardous Materials
- Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention
- Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources –Archeological and Architectural sub-category only
- Land Use
- Visual Effects – Light Emissions only
- Natural Resources and Energy Supply – Natural Resources sub-category only

The Proposed Action would not cause changes in patterns of population movement or growth, public service demands, or business and economic activity. In addition, the Proposed Action does not involve construction or other ground disturbing activities that would involve the relocation of people or businesses. Furthermore, the Proposed Action does not include the construction of airport facilities that would result in or induce an increase in operational capacity. Thus, the Proposed Action would not result in Secondary or Induced impacts.

Those environmental impact categories that could potentially be affected by the Proposed Action are discussed further in the following sections.

Noise

As required by FAA Order 1050.1F, the Aviation Environmental Design Tool version 3d (AEDT 3d) was used to model the noise impacts for the SAT AMP project because the project involves a study area larger than the immediate vicinity of an airport, incorporates more than one airport, and includes actions above 3,000 feet above ground level (AGL). Due to the presence of a dedicated military airbase (RND) as a Study Airport and joint use civilian but primarily military Study Airport (SKF), NOISEMAP was use for military aircraft modelling and the results were combined with AEDT 3d noise output using the BaseOPS NMPlot to combine results. Noise was analyzed for both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative during the year in which implementation of the Proposed Action would be initiated (2023) and a five-year look-ahead (2028).

The AEDT model computed DNL exposure values at three sets of data points throughout the General Study Area:

1. United States Census Bureau population census block centroids (center point of a census block)
2. Unique points representing certain specific cultural resources and areas potentially protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (DOT Act) (49 U.S.C. § 303(c)), and historic properties protected under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)(16 U.S.C. § 470 *et seq.*);
3. A uniform grid covering the General Study Area (using 0.5 nautical mile spacing) to document aircraft DNL exposure levels at potential noise sensitive locations that were not otherwise identified.

Aircraft noise exposure was modeled for both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative under 2023 and 2028 forecast conditions. For 2023:

- No significant noise (+1.5 DNL dB resulting in 65 DNL dB or higher) was identified.
- 11 Census block centroid receptor points representing 573 persons were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.
- Six 0.5 NM evenly spaced grid receptor points were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.
- Finally, six 4(f) receptor points representing 11 named resources were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.

For 2028,

- No significant noise (+1.5 DNL dB resulting in 65 DNL dB or higher) was identified.
- Three Census block centroid receptor points representing 100 persons were identified in the +3.0 dB resulting in a value of 60-65 DNL dB.
- Two 0.5 NM evenly spaced grid receptor points were identified in the +3.0 dB resulting in a value of 60-65 DNL dB.
- 108 Census block centroid receptor points representing 8,608 persons were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.

- 130 0.5 NM evenly spaced grid receptor points were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.
- Finally, 19 4(f) receptor points representing 24 named resources were identified in the +5.0 dB resulting in a value of 45-60 DNL dB.

The noise analysis demonstrates that implementing the Proposed Action would not result in a day-night average sound level (DNL) increase of 1.5 DNL dB or higher in noise-sensitive areas exposed to DNL 65 dB or higher. Therefore, neither the Proposed Action nor No Action Alternative would result in a significant noise impact.

Noise Compatible Land Use

Analysis of the potential impacts to noise compatible land use was focused on changes in aircraft noise exposure resulting from implementing the Proposed Action. FAA Order 1050.1F states, “The compatibility of existing and planned land uses in the vicinity of an airport is usually associated with the extent of the airport’s noise impact. If the noise analysis concludes that there is no significant impact, a similar conclusion usually may be drawn with respect to compatible land use.” Air traffic actions like the SAT AMP do not result in direct impacts to land such as ground disturbance. Accordingly, the compatible land use analysis relies on changes in aircraft noise exposure between the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative as the basis for determining compatible land use impacts within the General Study Area.

The Proposed Action, when compared with the No Action Alternative, would not result in changes in aircraft noise exposure in 2023 and 2028 that would exceed the FAA’s significance threshold. Likewise, there are no conflicts with federal, regional, state, or local land use plans, policies, and controls. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant compatible land use impacts.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no changes to air traffic routing in the General Study Area and no changes in aircraft noise exposure expected to occur in either 2023 or 2028. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not result in significant compatible land use impacts.

Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)

Evaluating potential impacts to Section 4(f) resources focuses on changes in aircraft noise exposure resulting from implementing the Proposed Action. The FAA’s aircraft noise exposure analysis indicates that the Proposed Action would result in a reportable noise increase at six Section 4(f) resources in 2023 and 19 identified Section 4(f) resources in 2028 within the General Study Area, when compared with the No Action Alternative. The Section 4(f) resources identified within the areas of reportable noise increase consist of recreational parks, cemeteries, historical markers, and private attractions. None of the resources are managed for a quiet setting, are located in suburban, intensive recreational, or near high traffic areas, and are easily vehicle accessible. None of the resources have been designated by the state, local, or federal resource managers as having a high potential value for further noise reduction. Those closest to RND have historically experienced jet aircraft noise since the earliest days of military jet aviation in the 1950s and identified resources in the Cibolo area were converted from residential to park uses in the prior 15 years. RND itself is a National Park Service Historic District and a listed NRHP resource. Furthermore, changes in aircraft overflight would occur at altitudes and distances from viewers that would not

substantially impair the view or setting of Section 4(f) resources. Therefore, no constructive use of a Section 4(f) resource associated with the Proposed Action would occur and no significant impact would be anticipated. Concurrence in the FAA's methodology and findings was provided by the US National Park Service and the US Department of the Interior.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes in air traffic routes in the General Study Area would occur. Therefore, no changes to aircraft noise exposure or aircraft overflight patterns would occur over Section 4(f) resources and no impacts would be anticipated.

Historical and Cultural Resources

The aircraft noise exposure analysis indicates that there would be no significant impact to the noise environment at any historic or cultural resources under the Proposed Action compared with the No Action Alternative. The aircraft noise exposure analysis indicates there would be reportable noise increases in the vicinity of Bulverde, Spring Branch, and Cibolo (Texas) within the General Study Area. Changes in historic and current aircraft traffic patterns would occur at altitudes and distances from viewers that would not substantially impair the view or setting of historic or cultural resources or those resources potentially eligible for NHRP listing. The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly change any known characteristics qualifying or potentially qualifying a historic resource for inclusion in or its eligibility for the NRHP. No adverse effects to historic or cultural resources under the Proposed Action would be anticipated for either 2023 or 2028. Concurrence for the FAA methodology and findings was provided by the Texas Historical Commission State Historic Preservation Officer.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to air traffic routes in the San Antonio Airspace Modernization Project would occur in either 2023 or 2028 and no changes to aircraft noise exposure or changes in aircraft overflight patterns over historic or cultural resources would be anticipated. Therefore, no historic or cultural resources would be affected by aircraft noise, nor would there be any visual impacts at historic or cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Wildlife (Avian and Bat Species)

The greatest potential for impacts to wildlife species would result from wildlife strikes on avian and bat species at altitudes below 3,000 feet AGL. Changes to flight paths under the Proposed Action would primarily occur at or above 3,000 feet AGL. Further, the Proposed Action would not increase the frequency of military or civilian flight operations. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to avian and bat species when compared with the No Action Alternative. Concurrence in the FAA's finding and methodology was provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The No Action Alternative would not involve changes to air traffic flows, land acquisition, construction, or other ground disturbance activities. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to fish, wildlife, or plants.

Environmental Justice

Neither the Proposed Action nor the No Action Alternative would displace people or businesses; therefore, implementing the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative would not result in direct impacts in this category. No areas within the General Study Area would experience significant impacts to air quality or noise. While some areas would be exposed to reportable noise increases of DNL 5 dB within areas exposed to DNL 45 to 60 dB, these

would not constitute a significant impact related to a change in DNL exposure to people, including members of minority and/or low-income populations (see Section 5.1). Moreover, the FAA has engaged and is engaging with environmental justice communities within the study area and has not identified impacts that would affect an environmental justice population in a way that would be unique to the environmental justice population and significant to that population. Therefore, no disproportionately high and adverse effects to minority populations or low-income populations would occur under either the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

Energy Supply

In comparison to the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would result in a slight increase in aircraft fuel consumed in 2023 of 1.59 percent. The Proposed Action would result in a slight increase in aircraft fuel consumed in 2028 of 1.59 percent. These increases would not be expected to be disruptive to or meaningfully affect local aircraft fuel supplies. Therefore, no significant impacts to energy supply would be anticipated.

The No Action Alternative would not involve changes to air traffic flows, construction, or other ground disturbance activities. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not result in the depletion of local energy supply.

Air Quality

The Proposed Action would result in a slight increase in emissions when compared to the No Action Alternative. However, changes to flight paths under the Proposed Action would primarily occur at or above 3,000 feet AGL and are presumed to conform to the applicable state implementation plans (SIPs). Furthermore, changes to flight paths below the mixing height are also presumed to conform when modifications to procedures are designed to enhance operational efficiency. The slight increase in emissions is expected to have little if any effect on emissions or ground concentrations. Therefore, no significant impacts to air quality would be anticipated. Concurrence in the FAA's finding and methodology was provided by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The No Action Alternative would not result in a change in the number of aircraft operations or air traffic routes; therefore, no impacts to air quality would be anticipated.

Climate

Although fuel consumption would increase slightly under the Proposed Action as compared to the No Action Alternative, no significant impacts to the climate would be anticipated.

The No Action Alternative would not result in a change in the number of aircraft operations or air traffic routes; therefore, no impacts to climate would be anticipated.

Visual Effects

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not increase the number of aircraft operations at the Study Airports compared with the No Action Alternative. Changes in aircraft traffic movement under the Proposed Action are expected to be at altitudes and distances sufficiently removed from viewers that new visual impacts would not be anticipated.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes in air traffic routes would occur and no changes in aircraft overflight would be expected. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not result in visual impacts.

Cumulative Impacts

Consideration of cumulative impacts applies to the impacts resulting from the implementation of the Proposed Action with other actions. CEQ regulations define a cumulative impact as "an impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions." The regulations also state that cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions that take place over a period of time.

The implementation of the Proposed Action when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions would not be expected to result in significant cumulative impacts.

The No Action Alternative would not result in a change in the number of aircraft operations or air traffic routes; therefore, no cumulative impacts would be anticipated.

Mitigation

Thresholds of significance for any environmental impact category would not be exceeded due to the Proposed Action; therefore, no mitigation is being proposed as part of this project.

Other Considerations

The Proposed Action involves air traffic control routing changes for airborne aircraft only. The United States Government has exclusive sovereignty of airspace in the United States [49 U.S.C. Section 40103(a)]. Congress has provided extensive and plenary authority to the FAA concerning the efficient use and management of the navigable airspace, air traffic control, air navigation facilities, and the safety of aircraft and persons and property on the ground [49 U.S.C. Sections 40103(b)(l) and (2)]. To the extent applicable, and as there are no significant impacts under noise or compatible land use, the Proposed Action is consistent with the plans, goals, and policies for the area and with the applicable regulations and policies of federal, state, and local agencies.

VIII. AGENCY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement and early consultation process began with the initiation of the preparation of the EA. On July 28, 2022, the FAA distributed an early notification letter to 255 federal, state, regional, and local officials and agencies, as well as to eight tribes. On July 31, 2022, a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EA was published in English and Spanish in the San Antonio Express-News, New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung, and La Prensa Texas newspapers. Due to weekly publishing, the same notice was published in the August 3, 2022 San Antonio Observer newspaper. Written comments were received in response to the Notice of Intent and where applicable, were considered in preparation of the Final EA.

In October 2022, the FAA initiated formal Section 106 consultation with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservations Officers (THPOs) from the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Comanche Nation Oklahoma, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Mescalero Apache

Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation New Mexico, Osage Nation, Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, and the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie) Oklahoma, who may have interests within the General Study Area in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq.) and the implementing regulations at 36 C.F.R. Part 800. No Tribes requested formal consultation.

The EA was released on October 20, 2022. The FAA updated the project website to reflect the release of the EA, including making the entire EA and supporting map files available electronically. The FAA published notice of availability of the EA the same newspapers as the notice of intent. Digital copies were made available to select libraries in each County of the General Study Area. In addition, the FAA sent letters to the previous recipients of the early coordination letters to update them on the status of the project, advise them of the release of the EA (including the project's web address), and solicit comments. Public meetings were conducted virtually across multiple digital outlets. Public comments were solicited through all formal public involvement efforts and no public comments were received within the nearly six week formal comment solicitation period on the Draft EA.

IX. THE AGENCY'S FINDINGS

A. The SAT AMP will ensure the safety of aircraft and the efficient use of airspace. (49 U.S.C. § 40103(b)).

The Federal Aviation Act of 1958 gives the Administrator the authority and responsibility to assign by order or regulation the use of the navigable airspace in order to ensure the safety of aircraft and the efficient use of the airspace. In its continuous effort to ensure safety of aircraft and improve the efficiency of transit through the navigable airspace, the FAA will create or modify SIDs and STARs and initial approach procedures in the San Antonio region. The project will enhance the efficiency of the airspace in the San Antonio region by creating more predictable ground and vertical paths through the limited airspace in the San Antonio region. Additionally, this project will allow the FAA to further achieve its NextGen goals.

In deciding to implement the Proposed Action, the FAA carefully evaluated both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternatives. The No Action Alternative would do nothing to improve the efficiency of the airspace or address any of the three key causal factors for airspace efficiency. The No Action Alternative would not further the Agency's goal in transitioning to NextGen.

B. This project does not involve the use of any historic sites or other properties protected under Department of Transportation Act Section 303(c), also known as Section 4(f) or under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The project does not involve any physical development or modification of facilities and therefore no actual, physical use of resources protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act would result. The project would also not result in a constructive use of any protected property because it would not cause increases in noise sufficient to impair the value of those resources. None of the protected properties in the General Study Area have a quiet setting as a generally recognized purpose and attribute.

The project would not cause an adverse effect on historic resources listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This determination is based on consultation

under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with the Texas Historic Commission State Historic Preservation Officer, the National Park Service, and the Department of the Interior.

C. Clean Air Act, Section 176 (c)(1) Conformity Determination (42 U.S.C. § 7506(c)).

The project is an air traffic control activity that adopts approach and departure procedures for air operations. It is presumed to conform under 72 Fed. Reg. 41565 (July 30, 2007). The project would not result in the development of physical facilities nor would it result in or induce an increase in operational capacity in the study area. Detailed analysis was not necessary to conclude that the project conforms to the purposes of the SIP for the State of Texas. The project will not cause a new violation of the NAAQS, worsen an existing violation, or delay meeting the standards of the NAAQS in the General Study Area.

D. Findings Pursuant to the Purpose and Need

Upon implementing the Proposed Action, the airspace that serves the Study Airports would include optimized air traffic routings to improve the efficiency of the air traffic routes. Based on the EA prepared for the Proposed Action, this FONSI/ROD is issued. Both the EA and the FONSI/ROD are hereby incorporated into this decision.

X. DECISIONS AND ORDERS

After careful and thorough consideration of the EA and the facts contained herein, I find that the Proposed Action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable environmental requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of National Environmental Policy Act. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

I, the undersigned, have reviewed the referenced EA including the evaluation of the purpose and need that this Project would serve, the alternative means of achieving the purpose and need, and the environmental impacts associated with these alternatives. I find the Project described in the EA is reasonably supported, and issuance of a finding of no significance is appropriate. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

I have carefully considered the FAA's statutory mandate under 49 U.S.C. § 40103 to ensure the safe and efficient use of the national airspace system as well as the other aeronautical goals and objectives discussed in the EA.

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I approve the operational changes as described in the proposed action alternative and direct that actions be taken that will enable implementation of the San Antonio Airspace Modernization Project.

Approved: ROBERT W BECK Digitally signed by ROBERT W BECK Date: 2023.02.14 13:14:14 -06'00'

Robert W. Beck
Director
Central Service Center, AJV-C
Federal Aviation Administration

Date

RIGHT OF APPEAL

This FONSI/ROD constitutes a final order of the FAA Administrator and is subject to exclusive judicial review under 49 U.S.C. § 46110 by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia or the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the person contesting the decision resides or has its principal place of business. Any party having substantial interest in this order may apply for review of the decision by filing a petition for review in the appropriate U.S. Court of Appeals no later than 60 days after the order is issued in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. § 46110. Any party seeking to stay implementation of the ROD must file an application with the FAA prior to seeking judicial relief as provided in Rule 18(a) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure.