

APPENDIX K
PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSE
TO COMMENTS

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K.1 INTRODUCTION

This appendix contains a list of 3 substantive comment submissions received concerning the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) during the 45-day comment period between July 9, 2024 to August 23, 2024 and the responses to those comments.

Following this introduction, **Section K.2** provides a list of commenters grouped by agencies, organizations, and the general public. Within the groupings, commenters are organized in alphabetical order.

Section K.3 contains copies of comments received during the comment period and responses to those comments. Commenters had the opportunity to provide comments in oral, written, and electronic formats. FAA solicited comments through public notices and collected comments orally and in writing at the public open house on August 8, 2024, in writing via U.S. mail, and electronically via email. Each written comment is presented as it was received by the FAA and any misspellings have not been corrected. Each written comment is numbered in the margin of the comment submission, and the responses to all comments follow that comment submission.

K.2 LIST OF COMMENTERS

TABLE K.2-1
LIST OF COMMENTERS

Comment Number	Name	Affiliation	Date	Submission Type
Agencies				
A-1	Ryan Vise	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	7/19/2024	Email
A-2	Russell Hooten	Texas Parks and Wildlife	8/9/2024	Email
Organizations				
None				
Public				
P-1	Gloria French		8/8/2024	Oral

Source: RS&H, 2024.

K.3 COMMENTS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EA

Commenter A-1

Ryan Vise

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has reviewed the above-referenced project and offers the following comments:

The proposed action is located in Bexar County, which is designated nonattainment for the 2015 eight-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) with a classification of moderate; therefore, federal Clean Air Act, §176(c) general conformity requirements apply. Per federal general conformity regulations at 40 CFR §93.153, a conformity demonstration may be required when the total projected direct and indirect volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrogen oxides (NOX) emissions—precursor pollutants that lead to the formation of ozone—from an applicable federal action are equal to or exceed the de minimis emissions level of 100 tons per year for ozone NAAQS moderate nonattainment areas.

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For emissions analyses conducted to determine general conformity applicability, the TCEQ recommends using a methodology consistent with the requirements at 40 CFR §93.159. According to the information provided, emissions from this proposed action are expected to be de minimis.

We are in support of the project. The environmental assessment addresses issues related to surface and groundwater quality.

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The management of industrial and hazardous waste at the site including waste treatment, processing, storage and/or disposal is subject to state and federal regulations. Construction and Demolition waste must be sent for recycling or disposal at a facility authorized by the TCEQ. Special waste authorization may be required for the disposal of asbestos containing material.

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Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please contact the agency NEPA coordinator at (512) 239-5538 or NEPA@tceq.texas.gov

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Response to Commenter A-1

1. The Construction Emissions Inventory (CEI) of the Proposed Project was conducted using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator 3 (MOVES3.1) program and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) TexN2.2 program, which are consistent with general conformity regulation requirements at 40 CFR §93.159. The CEI determined that the pollutants from construction emissions are below the *de minimis* thresholds and would be temporary, lasting the duration of construction (2024 to 2027).

2. The commenter's support of the Proposed Project is noted.
3. As stated in **Section 3.8.5.2**, solid waste or hazardous substances generated or encountered during construction would be managed and disposed of in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. **Section 3.8.5.2** has been revised to state that the contractor would dispose of construction and demolition waste at a facility authorized by TCEQ, and obtain special waste authorization from TCEQ for the disposal of asbestos-containing material, as needed.
4. The commenter's statement regarding the opportunity to review the Proposed Project is acknowledged.

Commenter A-2

Russell Hooten

Texas Department Parks and Wildlife

This letter is in response to your request for review of the proposed project referenced above. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has reviewed the information provided and offers the following comments and recommendations.

Project Description

The San Antonio Airport System (SAAS) proposes to undertake a number of improvement projects to provide new and modernized terminal facilities at the San Antonio International Airport. The Terminal Development Program (TDP) would include 26 project components within six categories: demolition, airfield, terminal, roadway, support, and utility. Four alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, were evaluated in the draft environmental assessment (EA). All of the project components would occur within the existing airport boundary and primarily within previously disturbed areas.

General Construction Recommendation

Information provided in the draft EA referenced potential beneficial management practices (BMP) that could be implemented during construction. To further assist in project planning, TPWD provides the following general construction recommendations and BMP:

<p>Recommendation: In general, TPWD recommends the judicious use and placement of sediment control fence to exclude wildlife from discrete construction areas, when applicable (e.g., around proposed HDD bore entrance and exit pits at Salado Creek and the Olmos Creek tributary). In many cases, sediment control fence placement for the purposes of controlling erosion and protecting water quality can be modified minimally to also provide the benefit of excluding wildlife access to construction areas. The exclusion fence should be buried at least six inches and be at least 24 inches high. The exclusion fence should be maintained for the life of the</p>	1
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project and only be removed after the project activities are completed and the disturbed sites have been revegetated or otherwise stabilized. Construction personnel should be encouraged to examine the inside of the exclusion area daily to determine if any wildlife species have been trapped inside the area of impact and provide safe egress opportunities prior to initiation of construction activities.

Recommendation: Regarding trenching for fuel transmission lines or other utilities, TPWD recommends contractors keep trenching, excavation, and backfilling crews close together to minimize the number of trenches or excavation areas left open at any given time during construction. Any holes left open for more than two daylight hours should be inspected for the presence of trapped wildlife prior to backfilling. TPWD recommends any open trenches or excavation areas be covered overnight and inspected every morning to ensure no wildlife species have been trapped. If trenches and excavation areas cannot be backfilled the day of initial excavation or covered overnight, then escape ramps should be installed, if feasible, at least every 300 feet. Escape ramps consist of short lateral trenches or wooden planks sloping to the surface at an angle less than 45 degrees (1:1) to allow wildlife to crawl out on their own.

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Recommendation: For soil stabilization and/or revegetation of disturbed areas within the proposed project area, TPWD recommends erosion and seed/mulch stabilization materials that avoid entanglement hazards to snakes and other wildlife species. Because the mesh found in many erosion control blankets or mats pose an entanglement hazard to wildlife, TPWD recommends the use of no-till drilling, hydromulching and/or hydroseeding due to a reduced risk to wildlife. If erosion control blankets or mats would be used, the product should contain no netting or contain loosely woven, natural fiber netting in which the mesh design allows the threads to move, therefore allowing expansion of the mesh openings. Plastic mesh matting and hydromulch containing microplastics should be avoided.

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Recommendation: TPWD recommends informing employees and contractors of the potential for state listed species and other SGCN to occur transiently in the project area and to avoid impacts to all wildlife that are encountered. Wildlife observed during construction should be allowed to safely leave the site or be translocated to a nearby area with similar habitat that would not be disturbed during construction. TPWD recommends that any translocations of reptiles be the minimum distance possible, no greater than one mile, and preferably with 100-200 yards from the initial encounter location. For purposes of relocation, surveys, monitoring, and research, state listed species may only be handled by persons with the appropriate authorization obtained through the TPWD Wildlife Permits Program. For more information on this authorization, please contact the Wildlife Permits Office at (512) 389-4647.

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Recommendation: Significant declines in the population of migrating monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*), a federal candidate species, have led to widespread concern about this species and other native insect pollinator species due to reduction in native floral resources. To support pollinators and migrating monarchs, TPWD encourages the establishment of native wildflower habitats on private and public lands. Infrastructure right-of-way (ROW) can provide habitat for a diverse community of pollinators, providing food, breeding, or nesting opportunities. Infrastructure ROW extend across a variety of landscapes and can aid dispersal of pollinators by linking fragmented habitats. By acting as refugia for maintenance of healthy ecosystems and provide ecological services such as crop pollination. The publication, Monarch Habitat Development on Utility Rights of Way, can be found at the TPWD Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program webpage.

TPWD encourages the project proponent to restore or revegetate impacted areas with vegetation that provides habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinator species. Species appropriate for establishment within the project area can be found by accessing the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, working with TPWD biologist to develop an appropriate list of species, or utilizing resources found at the Monarch Watch website or the Xerces Society's Guidelines webpage.

Impacts to Vegetation/Wildlife Habitat

Minimal details were provided on vegetation removal or revegetation/landscaping; therefore, TPWD is providing the following recommendations to assist in project planning. Review of aerial imagery indicates that some landscaping vegetation, including shrubs and trees, occur in areas proposed for new building construction (e.g., Project S-1, S-5).

Recommendation: TPWD recommends reducing the amount of vegetation proposed for clearing, if possible, and minimizing clearing native vegetation, particularly mature, mast producing native trees and shrubs, and riparian areas, including along drainage ditches, to the greatest extent practicable. Colonization by invasive species, particularly invasive grasses and weeds, should be actively prevented. Vegetation management should include removing invasive species early on while allowing existing native plants to revegetate disturbed areas. TPWD recommends referring to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Database for regionally adapted **native** species that would be appropriate for landscaping and revegetation. TPWD discourages the use of introduced species for landscaping and revegetation.

Federal Regulations

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits taking, attempting to take, capturing, killing, selling, purchasing, possessing, transporting, and importing of

migratory birds, their eggs, parts, or nests, except when specifically authorized by the Department of the Interior. This protection applies to most native bird species, including ground nesting species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Migratory Bird Office can be contacted at (505) 248-7882 for more information on potential impacts to migratory birds.

Based on the information provided, high quality habitat suitable for migratory birds is absent from the proposed project area. However, maintained grasslands as well as shrubs and trees used for landscaping may provide suitable nesting, feeding, loafing, and cover habitat for birds.

Recommendation: TPWD appreciates that previously disturbed areas would be utilized for the construction of the new terminal and associated improvements. Additionally, TPWD recommends scheduling any necessary vegetation clearing or trampling to occur outside of the March 15 - September 15 migratory bird nesting season in order to comply with the MBTA.

If vegetation clearing must be scheduled to occur during the nesting season, TPWD recommends the vegetation to be impacted should be surveyed for active nests by a qualified biologist. Nest surveys should be conducted no more than five days prior to the scheduled clearing to ensure recently constructed nests are identified. If active nests are observed during surveys, TPWD recommends a 100-foot radius buffer of vegetation remain around nests until eggs have hatched and the young have fledged; however, the size of the buffer zone is dependent on various factors and can be coordinated with the local or regional USFWS office.

State Regulations

Parks and Wildlife Code, Chapter 64-Birds

State law prohibits any take or possession of nongame birds, including their eggs and nests. Laws and regulations pertaining to state-protection of nongame birds are contained in chapter 64 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code (PWC); specifically, section 64.002 provides that no person may catch, kill, injure, pursue, or possess a bird that is not a game bird. PWC section 64.003, regarding destroying nests or eggs, provides that, no person may destroy or take the nests, eggs, or young and any wild game bird, wild bird, or wild fowl. PWC chapter 64 does not allow for incidental take.

Although not documented in the Texas Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD), many bird species which are not listed as threatened or endangered are protected by chapter 64 of the PWC and are known to be year-round or seasonal residents or seasonal migrants through the proposed project area.

Recommendation: Please review the *Federal Regulations: Migratory Bird Treaty Act* section above for recommendations as they are applicable for chapter 64 of the PWC compliance.

Parks and Wildlife Code, Section 68.015

PWC regulates state listed threatened and endangered animal species. The capture, trap, take, or killing of state-listed threatened and endangered animal species is unlawful unless expressly authorized under a permit issued by the USFWS or TPWD. A copy of *TPWD Guidelines for Protection of State-Listed Species*, which includes a list of penalties for take of species, can be found on the TPWD Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program website. State listed species may only be handled by persons with appropriate authorization from the TPWD Wildlife Permits Office.

The potential occurrence of state listed species in the project area is primarily dependent upon the availability of suitable habitat. Direct impacts to high quality or suitable habitat therefore are directly proportional to the magnitude and potential to directly impact state listed species. State listed amphibians and reptiles that are typically slow moving or unable to move due to cool temperatures are especially susceptible to being directly impacted during vegetation clearing and site preparation. Also, small wildlife such as lizards, tortoises, and snakes are susceptible to falling into open pits, trenches, bore holes, etc. left open and/or uncovered in a project area.

Please be aware that determining the actual presence of a species in a given area depends on many variables including daily and seasonal activity cycles, environmental activity cues, preferred habitat, transiency and population density (both wildlife and human). The absence of a species can be demonstrated only with great difficulty and then only with repeated negative observations, taking into account all the variable factors contributing to the lack of detectable presence.

Recommendation: TPWD recommends reviewing the most current TPWD annotated county lists of rare species for Bexar County. The annotated county lists are available online at the TPWD Wildlife Diversity website and are updated quarterly.

Recommendation: For encounters with rare species that will not readily leave the work area, please see recommendations pertaining to translocating individuals under the *General Construction Recommendations* above.

I appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on this project. Please contact me at (361) 431-6003 ext. 829 or **russell.hooten@tpwd.texas.gov** if we may be of further assistance.

Response to Commenter A-2

1. Best Management Practices (BMPs) in **Section 3.5.5.2** have been revised to include the use of a modified sediment control fence, or similar fence, around the excavated horizontal directional drilling (HDD) bore entrance and exit pits for the purpose of excluding wildlife. The contractor would monitor the

exclusion area daily for the presence of trapped wildlife and provide safe egress opportunities prior to commencing construction.

2. The BMPs in **Section 3.5.5.2** have been revised to include daily monitoring of open trenches and excavation areas for the presence of trapped wildlife and to allow safe egress opportunities prior to commencing construction. Where feasible, the contractor would limit the duration of open trenches and excavation areas and cover them overnight.
3. As stated in **Section 3.5.5.2** and **Section 3.5.6**, the Proposed Project would include the implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3) during construction that includes erosion control measures. BMPs in **Section 3.5.5.2** have been revised to avoid the use of loosely woven fibers that pose an entanglement hazard to wildlife.
4. **Section 3.5.5.2.2** has been revised to state that the contractor would contact the Airport for any species unable to leave the site, and the Airport would contact the TPWD Wildlife Permits Office to relocate any state-listed species, as needed. The contractor would provide safe egress opportunities to wildlife prior to commencing construction.
5. As noted in **Section 3.5.5.2**, construction of the Proposed Project would result in the loss or temporary disturbance of mowed and maintained grass within the airfield. Airfield grass is mowed to a height of 6 to 12 inches to minimize wildlife attractants and habitat structure in compliance with FAA AC 150/5200-33C, *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or near Airports*¹ and FAA CertAlert No. 98-05, *Grasses Attractive to Hazardous Wildlife*.² Therefore, mowed and maintained grass would not support pollinator habitat. Implementation of the Proposed Project may include additional landscaping near the terminal area. However, the landscaping would be similar to existing landscaping across the Airport property, which consists of low-maintenance plants, shrubs, and trees with mulch ground cover. As noted in **Section 3.5.5.2.1**, the Proposed Project would not affect monarch habitat and would have no effect on the monarch butterfly.
6. As stated in **Section 3.5.5.2**, construction of the Proposed Project avoids impacts to native trees, shrubs, and wetland/riparian habitats along drainage ditches and creeks. Ornamental trees and shrubs used in landscaping near the terminal area may be impacted. BMPs in **Section 3.5.5.2** have been

¹ Federal Aviation Administration. 2020. Advisory Circular 150/5200-33C. Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or near Airports. Retrieved January 2024 from https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/150-5200-33C.pdf

² Federal Aviation Administration. 1998. CertAlert No. 98-05. Grasses Attractive to Hazardous Wildlife. Retrieved January 2024 from https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/airports/airport_safety/wildlife/resources/cert9805.pdf

revised to state that the removal of mature trees and shrubs would be avoided to the greatest extent practicable and that regionally adapted species would be used for landscaping.

7. To prevent the take of birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, BMPs in **Section 3.5.5.2.3** have been revised to state the contractor would remove trees and shrubs outside of the March 15 - September 15 nesting season or confirm trees and shrubs do not contain active nests before removal.
8. To prevent the take of nongame birds, including their eggs and nests, BMPs in **Section 3.5.5.2.3** have been revised to state the contractor would remove trees and shrubs outside of the March 15 - September 15 nesting season or confirm trees and shrubs do not contain active nests before removal.
9. As stated in **Section 3.5.2.2.2**, the TPWD Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species List and Texas Natural Diversity Database (TxNDD) were reviewed to identify Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), threatened, and endangered species with the potential to occur in Bexar County. A "rare species search by county" was conducted on the TPWD Wildlife Diversity website, which yielded the same results for Bexar County as the TPWD Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species List. Therefore, no changes have been made to the EA.
10. The commenter's statement regarding the opportunity to review the Proposed Project is acknowledged.

Commenter P-1
Gloria French

Okay. I really like passing through the blocks of information that you have here. One of the things that I've noticed and discussed with one of the environmental planners was the fact that if we are going to connect all the terminals so that people can go from one terminal to the other, then I might suggest a moving walkway because it appears to me that the people are going to come in one terminal; they will already have their tickets; they will be dropping off their luggage; they're going to have to walk to the new terminal or get dropped off at the new terminal, and then after they go through security, they're going to have to walk back if they're going to the A Terminal or the B Terminal, and that could take more time than people are already planning for with their two hours being ahead of time. So I'm thinking that the walkway will help speed up some of the traffic as it does in many other airports. That is one comment.

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Another comment that I had is, as an ambassador, I see the congestion at drop off and pick up continuously, not just here, but also at other airports. Now, thinking out of the box because it appears there's no easy solution, possibly the road for

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pickup and drop off could have two zones that could be quite a bit wider where traffic dropping off for one airline would literally take one route and go between dividers and drop people off, and then people going to another airline would go off on the left-hand side. Then when people are done dropping off whoever, they can return to the middle and pass right through. I don't know if that's feasible, but I've seen it done now on the highways, and so I'm thinking that might be a possibility, but, again, there's space issues with making that throughway wider.

Also, so there's still a problem with people walking in front of vehicles in the lines to get to the other pickups for taxis, Uber, buses going back to parking lots or the parking areas and things like that. So if it would be possible to move those, you could totally eliminate people walking across the road, and that would make it a lot safer, and I think more efficient. That's all for now. I'm -- I'm thinking.

I think I had another -- I'm not sure here. Okay. And one -- one other thing that doesn't have to do very much with the airport construction, but that the signage needs to be more clear. All of the airlines do not have the same size font in their signs, whether it's posted in back of them or in front of them. We have signs everywhere telling people where to go, but they don't read the signs, and it's the same thing at arrivals, they don't read the signs to see which airline has their -- which carousel has their luggage. So they do need a lot of help. I certainly don't mind being an ambassador and assisting people, but it does get very confusing for the customers, themselves. So I would just say signage, maybe standardized signage if possible, and maybe change some of the colors of the signs so that red might mean Terminal B or Terminal C, or green would be going out to the street, or red could even be to go through security. Because in one terminal security is kind of hidden and -- which is a nice thing, but people don't see it, so they're always asking us where is security. Okay. I think that's all for now. There's a lot in there, but okay. Okay.

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Response to Commenter P-1

1. The inclusion of a moving walkway between terminals will be considered as a part of the final design of the Proposed Project. Therefore, this is outside the scope of the EA.
2. The Proposed Project includes the construction of a new terminal curbside roadway on both the departure and arrival levels and reconfiguration of the existing access roadway to reduce congestion, improve access points into the existing parking lots, and accommodate traffic flow. The final design and operation of the terminal curbside roadway and access roadway are outside the scope of the EA.
3. Improved wayfinding signage associated with Terminal C will be considered as a part of the final design of the Proposed Project. Therefore, this is outside the scope of the EA.