

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Contra Costa County owns and operates two general aviation airports, Byron Airport in East County, and Buchanan Field in Central County.

This technical report presents a recommended Master Plan for Byron Airport (the Airport). The Byron Airport Master Plan was prepared with funding assistance from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Caltrans. Developed by Leigh Fisher Associates (LFA) in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150-5070-6A, *Airport Master Plans*, the information, findings, and recommendations contained in the chapters that follow represent an update to the 1986 East Contra Costa County Airport (now called Byron Airport) Master Plan. The purpose of this updated plan is to provide guidance for the continued improvement of Byron Airport to the year 2023 and beyond.

BACKGROUND

Contra Costa County airport studies carried out in the late 1970s/early 1980s identified the need for one or more airports in the County to relieve the aircraft parking and operational pressures on Buchanan Field in Concord. Continued urbanization in the western and central sections of the County made it impossible to develop a new airport in those areas. The County then focused its attention on finding a site for a new airport in the eastern part of the County. The East Contra Costa County Airport Master Plan (1986 Plan) completed in May 1986 was the third of three documents prepared as part of the East Contra Costa County Airport Site Study, the others being the *Phase 1: Site Identification and Evaluation* (October 1984) report, and the *Environmental Impact Report: East Contra Costa Airport* (Draft, September 1985; responses to comments, January 1986). Preparation of an Airport Layout Plan for the Byron site and assessment of the environmental impacts of airport development at Byron were presented in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR was reviewed by governmental agencies as well as the general public, responses to comments were prepared, and the document was subsequently certified by the County Planning Commission.

The site evaluation culminated in the County Board of Supervisors selection of the Byron Airpark (a small privately owned airport located in the southeastern area of the County) to provide aviation facilities for the residents of East County. The Byron Airpark was purchased in 1986, and the new airfield constructed in the early 1990's. The new Byron Airport was opened to the public in 1994, replacing the Byron Airpark that occupied the northwest corner of the current airport property.

Prior to initiating the current master planning effort, the County carried out a number of analyses to determine the appropriate role of Byron Airport in serving regional aviation needs, particularly focused on the potential for Byron Airport to serve as a cargo airport. Some of the conclusions resulting from these analyses indicated that:

- *Cargo development at Byron Airport would be expected to follow a development cycle.* Large air cargo aircraft operations are unlikely in the next 10 to 15 years, and likely Airport activities in the short-term will result from trucking activity and the Airport's relationship to other airports. Feeder (or propeller) aircraft represent the most likely source of initial air cargo activity and incremental growth at the Airport, building on trucking activity.
- *Regional economic trends will likely support aviation growth.* The eastern section of Contra Costa County, in which the Airport is located, has experienced growth in residential and industrial development as population and business activity force new development outside more developed areas of the East Bay (specifically, Alameda County). This trend is expected to continue in the long-term. Diversified regional development, including office, light industrial, warehousing and logistical, and residential development would likely facilitate economic and aeronautical growth.
- *The Bay Area's general aviation market has a long-term need for facilities.* Corporate aviation has been and is expected to be one of the fastest growing general aviation market segments, and is expected to spur demand for aircraft hangar storage and for the fixed base operators that support such corporate activity.
- *The major factors that will affect the potential development of air cargo and general aviation are external to the Airport.* There is currently a low concentration of "cargo-generating" business and a low concentration of population and business relevant to general aviation, surrounding the Airport. Improvements of the regional road and highway network would also be needed.
- *Developments on-Airport could support and enhance regional development and the potential for air cargo and general aviation.* Incremental development of general aviation and specialty aviation activity at Byron Airport would attract and facilitate aviation support services useful to potential air cargo feeder operators. Incremental development of nonaeronautical property at Byron Airport would assist in generating sufficient local business activity that could support air cargo development, including office and light industrial parks and distribution centers.

THE BYRON AIRPORT MASTER PLAN PROJECT

In keeping with FAA guidelines, the updated Master Plan for Byron Airport involves a 20-year planning period with 2003 as the base year. Individual airport improvement recommendations are oriented to 5- (2008), 10- (2013) and 20-year (2023) planning horizons. The end product of the study includes this technical report and a companion set of ALP drawings. The intent of the Byron Airport Master Plan is to provide Contra Costa County with guidance concerning how the airport should develop over the 20-year planning period.

Project Coordination and Public Involvement

An extensive intergovernmental agency coordination and public involvement process was carried out as part of the Byron Airport Master Plan project. Key elements of the process included:

- A Working Group comprising Airport staff and staff from Public Works and Community Development served as the primary project coordination mechanism for the consultant team. This Working Group met regularly throughout the course of the project.
- A Steering Committee was convened at key times during the project and served as a “sounding board” for findings, conclusions, and recommendations pertaining to the development of the Master Plan. Steering Committee members included representatives of the aviation community, public agencies, and elected officials.
- Workshops were conducted at key points during the Project for the public-at-large. Organized to permit participation by citizens and organizations with an interest in the future of Byron Airport, these workshops involved a flexible drop-in format. The Consulting Team personnel and Airport staff were available to discuss the project with citizens on a one-to-one basis. Three public workshops were held during the project.

Appendix A to this report provides details of the project coordination and public involvement process, including dates and locations of meetings, workshops, and other project-related activities.