

29 October 22, 2024

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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October 22, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
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Dear Supervisors:

**SEEKING BOARD AUTHORITY TO CONTRACT FOR
AN (1) ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS AND (2) LAND
USE STUDY FOR THE PROPOSED WHITEMAN
AIRPORT REPURPOSING
(THIRD DISTRICT)
(3 VOTES)**

SUBJECT:

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is seeking the Board of Supervisors' approval to authorize the DEO to contract with Trifiletti Consulting to conduct an economic impact analysis and land use study for the potential repurposing of the County of Los Angeles (County) owned Whiteman Airport, located at 10000 Airpark Way, Pacoima, California 91331.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

1. Find that approval is not subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the reasons set forth below.
2. Authorize and delegate authority to the Director of DEO, or her designee, to execute an amendment to the County's contract with Trifiletti Consulting to increase the compensation from \$600,000, previously awarded for other projects, to \$1,900,000 to conduct an economic impact analysis and land use study for the potential repurposing of the Whiteman Airport, located in the City of Los Angeles at 10000 Airpark Way, Pacoima, California 91331, upon approval as to form by County Counsel.

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The resulting increase of \$1,300,000 includes \$350,000 from Public Works' Aviation ~~Economic Enterprise~~ Funds, \$475,000 from DEO's Catalytic Development Funds (CDF), and \$475,000 from the Third District's Social Program Agreement funds.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The purpose of the recommended actions is to execute an amendment to DEO's current contract with Trifiletti Consulting to conduct an economic analysis and land use study for the potential repurpose of the County-owned property at Whiteman Airport.

On an April 9, 2024 Motion, the Board directed the CEO in collaboration with the DPW to provide a plan and cost estimate to conduct a study of potential land uses for the 184-acre Whiteman Airport Property, both as an operational airport and as a repurposed property, along with an economic analysis of the impacts to the County and the Pacoima community if the airport was to close. CEO, along with DEO and DPW, provided a report back on June 13, 2024, with a proposed scope of work for a team of airport and aviation planning experts needed to complete the study. Accordingly, the report recommended a four-phase approach study: 1) Confirmation of Airport Closure Process; 2) Existing Conditions Analysis; 3) Options Development Incorporating Stakeholder Input; and 4) Economic Impact Analysis of Preferred Options. CEO roughly estimated the report to cost \$1.3 million through all four phases.

Although no final decision has been made to close Whiteman Airport, it is prudent at this time to investigate all potential impacts of airport closure to the Pacoima community and the County. These actions will consider the unique opportunity to reinvest in the community and improve County operations at a repurposed Whiteman Airport site in a manner that benefits County residents and the local economy. Hence, the DEO is seeking authority from the Board to work with its consultant to conduct an (1) Economic Impact Analysis and (2) Land Use Study for the potential repurpose of Whiteman Airport.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommended actions support Strategy I.1.5, Increase Affordable Housing Throughout the County; Strategy II.1, Drive Economic and Workforce Development in the County; Strategy II.1.2, Support Small Businesses and Social Enterprises; and Strategy III.3.2, Manage and Maximize County Assets. In this case, the County is supporting these goals by proposing a project that will potentially provide affordable housing, uses a local and targeted workforce to construct the project and develops County assets in a manner that provides significant local revitalization.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The cost of the Economic Impact Analysis of \$350,000 will be funded from Public Works' Aviation ~~Economic Enterprise~~ Funds. The Land Use Study, including an appraisal for an airport property of this size and complexity, of \$950,000 will be funded with \$475,000 from DEO's Catalytic Development Funds (CDF) and \$475,000 from the Third District's Social Program Agreement funds. There is no impact to new County General Funds.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Privately built in 1946, Whiteman Airport (WHP) was acquired by Los Angeles County in 1970. It is one of five general aviation airports operated by Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (DPW). The airport plays an important role in the local and regional transportation networks, with more than 82,000 takeoffs and landings annually. More than 600 general aviation pilots are based at Whiteman Airport, which also hosts numerous Sheriff, Fire, other law enforcement, disaster response, and news gathering flight operations each year.

Pacoima is a vibrant working-class community in the northeast San Fernando Valley. It is surrounded on three sides by freeways and bifurcated by railroad tracks. The Pacoima community within the vicinity of Whiteman Airport has voiced serious concerns about the impacts of the airport on health and safety. On December 8, 2020, the Board adopted a motion directing DPW to engage local stakeholders to undertake a community-driven master plan for Whiteman Airport that maintains the property's primary function as an airport but provides for the creation of local jobs, community beneficial uses, and open space opportunities.

The Board also instructed DPW to create a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide residents with opportunities for local input on airport operations and to conduct appropriate environmental studies to assess the airport's potential environmental and health risks. At its conclusion, the CAC recommended improving various aspects of airport operations and that the Board consider the closure of the airport.

On January 25, 2022, the Board instructed DPW to collaborate with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to explore the initial steps in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) airport closure application process. The resulting report identified four primary tasks that focus on the impacts to aviation interests in meeting FAA requirements in considering airport closure. These tasks include an assessment of current conditions, regional aviation impacts, financial analysis, and impacts on aviation operations.

As noted above, the Board adopted an April 2024 Motion seeking a plan and cost estimate to conduct an economic analysis and study of potential land uses for the Whiteman Airport Property. The CEO provided a report in June 2024 responding to this motion that outlined estimated costs and a proposed scope of work for the study, which DEO is seeking to complete using the authority granted through his Board Letter.

CONTRACTING PROCESS

On April 4th, 2023, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors delegated authority to the DEO's Director to execute agreements for the Project Management and Supportive Services/Loan Fund Advisory Services and waived the requirement of BOS Policy 5.100. The DEO's agreement with Trifiletti Consulting supports DEO in the planning and project management of its capital development and capital access opportunities across the County as the department builds internal capacity, with an annual compensation of up to \$600,000. During

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the term of this agreement, Trifiletti has assisted the DEO in the management and potential developments of County-owned land.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The proposed approval of the Contract amendment for increased compensation for consulting services is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is an activity that is excluded from the definition of a project by section 21065 of the Public Resources Code and sections 15061(b), 15262, and 15306 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This proposed action to extend the existing contracts is an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the recommended actions would not result in any immediate change or impact on current County services. The findings of the study resulting from the recommended actions will inform future County decisions and next steps related to potential uses for the Whiteman Airport Property.

CONCLUSION

If you have any questions, please contact Leila Lee, Assistant Director, Business and Economic Development, at llea@opportunity.lacounty.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



KELLY LOBIANCO
Director KL:JK

cc: Chief Executive Office
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel