



**TO:** Garfield County Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Sam Carver, Airport Director

**Subject:** *Request for options for Future Airport Land Development*

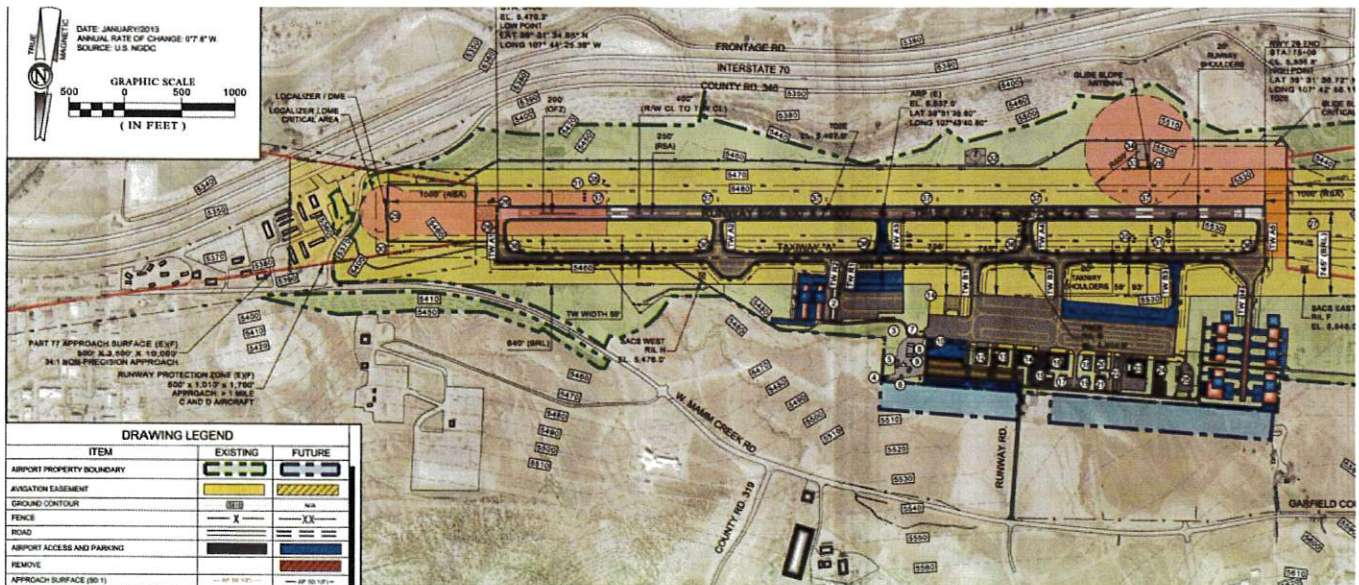
**Date:** February 18, 2025

## I. Introduction

The Rifle Garfield County Airport seeks direction from the Garfield County Commissioners (BOCC) regarding the future development of available airport land at Rifle Garfield County Airport (RIL). The Airport Master Plan update is currently underway and will guide the Airport's growth and operations over the next 20 years.

During recent discussions, three potential approaches were identified:

1. Issuing a New Request for Conceptual Proposals (RFCP)
2. Using a First-Come, First-Served System
3. Pausing Development Until the Master Plan is Completed



## II. Project Overview

- **Available Parcels:** Several undeveloped or underutilized areas at RIL may be suitable for various types of development. The long-term strategy for these parcels should balance economic opportunities with the Airport's operational and regulatory requirements.
- **Current Status:** RIL has historically used both RFCP and first-come, first-served models; most recently, an RFCP was employed to solicit proposals and allocate land.
- **Master Plan Update:** Expected to conclude in approximately 12 to 18 months, the plan will provide a comprehensive framework for future infrastructure, operations, and land use.

## III. Analysis of Approaches

### 1. Issuing a New RFCP

#### Pros:

- Encourages competitive, transparent selection.
- Potentially attracts a variety of innovative, high-value proposals.

#### Cons:

- Development might conflict with pending Master Plan recommendations.
- Could require rework if awarded projects misalign with future strategic goals.

### 2. First-Come, First-Served

#### Pros:

- Streamlines decision-making for developers prepared to move forward quickly.

#### Cons:

- May not fully align with the Airport's long-term best interest without Master Plan insights.
- Could inadvertently grant exclusive advantages if not carefully structured.

### 3. Pausing Development Until the Master Plan is Completed

#### Pros:

- Ensures new developments align with updated forecasts, design standards, and a 20-year strategic vision.
- Minimizes risk of needing to relocate or retrofit projects that conflict with planned infrastructure.
- Provides a structured plan that supports compliance with FAA regulations on non-discrimination and equitable access.

**Cons:**

- Delays immediate revenue generation and requires communicating wait times to interested developers.

**IV. Development Considerations**

- **Long-Term Planning:** The Master Plan will provide a structured approach to development that aligns with the Airport's future needs.
- **Regulatory & Community Impact:**
  - Projects must comply with FAA standards, Garfield County requirements, and garner stakeholder support.
  - A well-defined approach for making land available ensures fairness for all potential users.
- **Market Demand:** While some developers prefer immediate access, a phased approach based on the finalized Master Plan often results in more optimal land-use decisions over the long term.

**V. Staff Recommendation**

Airport Administration recommends pausing new land development actions until the Airport Master Plan is completed. Once the Master Plan is finalized, staff proposes a strategic, phased approach using the RFCP process for each phase. This method:

- Aligns development decisions with the Airport's 20-year outlook.
- Minimizes conflicts if future infrastructure needs arise.
- Promotes compliance with FAA regulations regarding economic non-discrimination and the avoidance of exclusive rights.

**VI. Next Steps**

If the BOCC concurs with staff's recommendation:

1. Pause additional land development solicitations until the Master Plan is finalized.
2. Complete and memorialize a structured plan within the updated Master Plan framework, ensuring it addresses infrastructure priorities and stakeholder needs.
3. Formulate phased RFCPs guided by the Master Plan, ensuring each round meets infrastructure requirements and community objectives while adhering to FAA guidelines.