



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/19/2025

File #: 25-308

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Aviation

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Letter of Support for the Murray Field Airport Sea Level Rise Planning and Economic Feasibility Study Proposed by the California Department of Transportation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorizing the Chair of the Board to sign the attached letter of support for the Murray Field Airport Sea Level Rise Planning and Economic Feasibility Study proposed by the California Department of Transportation.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommended actions support the following areas of the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan:

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship

Strategic Plan Category: 5001 - Enhance climate adaptation landscapes and communities

DISCUSSION:

In 2021, the California Department of Transportation ("Caltrans") initiated the development of a Comprehensive Adaptation and Implementation Plan ("CAIP") to address sea level rise impacts on the Eureka-Arcata Highway 101 corridor. Over the last few years, Caltrans has been working with Cal Poly Humboldt and local consultants to prepare technical studies that will inform the CAIP. Currently, the CAIP is scheduled for completion in 2027.

Murray Field Airport is located adjacent to the Eureka-Arcata Highway 101 corridor on low-lying ground protected by levees. In 2021, the Humboldt County Department of Public Works ("Public Works") completed a sea level rise study for the Eureka Slough hydrographic area which includes the Murray Field Airport, Jacobs Avenue and portions of Highway 101 and the future Humboldt Bay Trail. The vulnerability of the Murray Field Airport to various flooding scenarios under current and future conditions was analyzed using detailed hydraulic modeling. While the vulnerability of the Murray Field Airport to sea level rise is well understood from this 2021 study, the next step is for the County of Humboldt to evaluate specific adaptation options and consider the long-term future of the Murray Field airport. The 2021 sea level rise study is available online at:

<https://humboldt.gov/2487/Sea-Level-Rise>.

In 2024, Caltrans requested that the County of Humboldt develop a new sea level rise study for the Murray Field Airport. After Public Works initially indicated that a new plan should be deferred due to limited staffing capacity and existing commitments, Caltrans approached the State Coastal Conservancy and asked the Conservancy to provide funding in the amount of Four Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$420,000.00) to Cal Poly Humboldt to develop a study for the Murray Field Airport. Caltrans has asked the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to provide the attached letter of support for their grant application.

Given the airport's vital role in general aviation, freight transport, and emergency air ambulance services, addressing its vulnerability to flooding hazards and sea level rise and developing a long-term plan is a priority for regional transportation and public safety.

County of Humboldt staff acknowledge the study's importance, it is imperative that the Department of Aviation and the Environmental Services Division of the Department of Public Works have roles to ensure the study aligns with the County of Humboldt's strategic vision, long-term infrastructure planning and financial sustainability. County staff will participate in technical advisory committee meetings.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact to the county in the signing the letter of support.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Should your Board choose to sign the letter of support the Department of Public Works and the Department of Aviation will require staff time to attend technical advisory committee meetings.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caltrans, Cal-Poly Humboldt, City of Eureka

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter of Support for the Murray Field Airport Sea Level Rise Planning and Economic Feasibility Study Proposed by the California Department of Transportation

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: None

File No.: None