



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/15/2023

File #: 23-955

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Aviation

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) and the County of Humboldt to Investigate Microgrid Development at County Airport Facilities

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Director of Aviation to execute the attached Memorandum of Understanding between Redwood Coast Energy Authority and the County of Humboldt to investigate microgrid development at county airport facilities.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Aviation Enterprise Fund (3530)

DISCUSSION:

The recent Redwood Coast Airport Microgrid at the California Redwood Coast - Humboldt County Airport (ACV) demonstrates the benefits of locating microgrids on county land to enhance resilience for critical facilities while also transitioning the region toward local, clean renewable energy generation. Rural airports are strong microgrid candidates since they have a priority need for sustained backup power and are often surrounded by open land that can be used for installation of solar arrays. For example, the Rohnerville Airport is a key lifeline for the Eel River Valley and provides a secondary hub to ACV for air-based emergency services and cargo delivery. This facility also hosts the Rohnerville Air Attack Base facility for wildland fire response, which on Aug. 5, 2022, had the busiest day of its 50-year history while fighting the Lightning Complex fires near Willow Creek.

Beyond its ongoing mission to promote clean renewable energy generation in our region, RCEA is subject to procurement orders issued by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) through the Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) proceeding, including Decision 21-06-035 and others. These decisions address the reliability needs of the state's electric grid in the face of retiring natural gas and nuclear power plants by obligating load serving entities such as RCEA to procure or develop new

capacity. RCEA's current outstanding IRP procurement obligation is to bring 8 MW of net qualifying capacity online by April 2025 from resources that can reliably generate from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. daily. Approximately 10-15 MW nameplate solar capacity paired with equivalent storage capacity would meet this obligation, depending on the generating and export capability of the resource(s). RCEA's procurement efforts to date have not yielded viable solutions to this obligation, so multiple avenues are currently being pursued including local microgrid development.

The purpose and scope of this MOU is to cooperatively explore renewable energy plus storage microgrid projects at regional airport facilities. In particular, the parties seek to:

- Inventory local airport facilities and their ability to support microgrid projects that would contribute to RCEA's clean energy goals, fulfill CPUC procurement obligations and directly support long-term regional aviation goals such as workforce development;
- Where feasible, select one or more facilities for initial development activities, such as determination of electrical interconnection requirements and costs, preliminary site design, and identification of acceptable lease arrangements between the Parties;
- Agree on which facilities, if any, are suitable for microgrid deployment and the order of priority in the event more than one facility is identified.

After identifying suitable facilities for microgrid deployment and an order of deployment priority under this MOU, future MOU(s) or contract(s) would identify the specific tasks, funding sources, and which each party would be responsible for individual expenses required to successfully construct, operate, and maintain the microgrid(s).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Costs for microgrid development at county airport facilities are unknown at this time. Once the investigations for this project are complete, the Department of Aviation will come back to your Board with the results and any anticipated project costs. There is no financial impact associated to approving this MOU.

STAFFING IMPACT:

This agenda item has no direct effect on staffing; however, it will have minor indirect impacts. County staff will be responsible to provide staff time and/or consultant and legal counsel time and resources to inventory airport resources and support RCEA's technical evaluation and feasibility assessment and potential evaluation of lease arrangements between parties.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework priority of creating opportunities for improved safety and health; providing community-appropriate levels of service ; managing our resources to ensure sustainability of services

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board may decide not to authorize the Director of Aviation to execute the attached MOU.

However, this alternative is not recommended as this MOU would contribute to future project development regarding fulfilling renewable energy goals in the County General Plan Energy Element, RCEA's 2019 RePower Strategic Plan update, and the countywide Climate Action Plan (CAP) currently under development.

ATTACHMENTS:

Memorandum of Understanding with RCEA

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A