



# NORTHERN COLORADO REGIONAL AIRPORT

## 2023-24 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



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*Troy Bliss – Member – Loveland Senior Planner*

*Scott Schorling – Member – Loveland Business Development Project Manager*

*James Hays – Member – FNL Pilots Association President*

# ***INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW***

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to clearly articulate the strategy for the operation and development of Northern Colorado Regional Airport and to outline the major work priorities for the next two years: 2023-2024. This plan was created by the Planning & Development Subcommittee and Airport Commission in late 2022 and early 2023 and presented to the Airport Commission for input and feedback in February 2023.

This plan is intended to guide the staff, the Planning & Development Subcommittee (PDSC), the Airport Commission, and Airport partners in moving toward our vision for the Airport's future.

## **OVERVIEW**

Northern Colorado Regional Airport (FNL) is centrally located in the Northern Colorado Front Range urban corridor. The region is a hub for a robust mix of residential, commercial, retail, logistics, technology, education and research, and aviation activity.

Located 55 miles north of Denver, the Airport is adjacent to the Interstate 25 and US Highway 34 travel corridors and is the closest airport to Rocky Mountain National Park. Approximately 827,000 people live, work, and play within 30 miles of the Airport.

With approximately 300 based aircraft and more than 100,000 annual operations, the Airport supports a wide range of commercial and general aviation activities. FNL is home to several flight schools and other aeronautical businesses. A 2020 study by the Colorado Department of Transportation estimated the economic impact of the Airport to be \$296 million annually.

## **VISION**

**Northern Colorado Regional Airport:** sparking innovative transportation and leading-edge economic development, training, research, and education throughout the region.



## **MISSION**

Serving the region, we are a catalyst for innovation in ground and air transportation, a driving force in business and training, and a global gateway to a magnificent Colorado.

# ***PART I: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NORTHERN COLORADO REGIONAL AIRPORT***

The Strategic Plan is divided into three sections of increasing detail. Immediately following are the four major “Focus Areas” that support the vision and represent key areas of continuing concern and emphasis.

The second section on “Strategic Objectives” represents the desired outcomes necessary to support the Focus Areas in achieving the vision. While many can and should be completed in the two-year timeframe of this plan, some may extend further into the future or even be continuing areas of emphasis, much as are the Focus Areas themselves.

The third and final section is a compilation of “Projects & Action Items,” those specific items that need to be accomplished to achieve the desired outcomes detailed in Section 2. These are prioritized according to their overall importance to the Airport in the near term, factoring in deadlines, interdependencies, and anticipated resources.

## **FOCUS AREAS**

Operation and development activities at Northern Colorado Regional Airport (FNL) fall into four general categories or Focus Areas. They are derived from previous facilitated strategic planning sessions held by the Airport Commission and are focused on a five-to-ten-year time horizon. These areas are:

- A. Safe, Secure, & Financially Sustainable Operations
- B. Multi-modal Transportation
- C. Economic Development & Impact
- D. Education, Training, and Innovation

The Focus Areas are overarching and intended to guide the realization of the vision of Northern Colorado Regional Airport. They are overlapping and mutually supportive. They are not prioritized, as they are all important.

**Safe, Secure, & Financially Sustainable Operations** - If an airport, like any public entity, is not both safe and secure, then little else matters. The Airport is committed to operating in a safe, secure, and effective manner in all areas, every day. It is managed in a financially sustainable way that ensures it has the necessary resources for ongoing operations and maintenance, while also being able to respond to unexpected events and changes in the industry.

**Multi-modal Transportation** - The Airport maintains critical infrastructure such as runways and taxiways and is a hub for many types of transportation: general and commercial aviation, private automobile, mass transit, rail, and combinations of these

modes. In addition to the Airport infrastructure, FNL is located next to the busy transit corridors of Interstate 25 and U.S. Highway 34 and a Union Pacific rail line, opening possibilities for integrating transportation modes to meet the needs of residents and businesses as well as those from out of state.

**Economic Development & Impact** - The Airport supports a variety of aviation and non-aviation-related businesses. It plays a key role in supporting the economic vitality of the region and is an important transportation link for business, recreation, and tourism. Fostering partnerships is important to realize the Strategic Objectives.

**Education, Training, and Innovation** - Among other things, this plan is based on the proposition that this community, like most communities, would benefit significantly from enhanced focus on education, training, and innovation. The Airport, both because of its focus on aviation and its central location in Northern Colorado, seems ideal for hosting a variety of activities, facilities, and businesses that emphasize one or more of these areas. Additionally, the Airport is committed to incorporating new technologies and innovative approaches wherever and however they may benefit Airport stakeholders and the region.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

This plan has developed a set of 10 Strategic Objectives in support of the four Focus Areas. Some of these objectives will support more than one focus area, a reflection of the interdependent nature of the Focus Areas.

The list of Objectives that follows outlines many of the outcomes necessary to realize the Airport's long-term vision. Obviously, some of these Objectives will be ongoing and few of them will be completed in the timeframe of this plan (2023-24). However, sufficient progress should be realized and measured by key performance indicators.

While all the Objectives are important, some are more important and/or more time sensitive than others. Thus, both the Strategic Objectives and Projects & Action Items are prioritized based on both their importance and the relative urgency of their accomplishment. Naturally, these priorities may change over time based on available resources and related circumstances.

The following guidelines were used to help identify and prioritize the Strategic Objectives and Projects & Action Items. They are not themselves prioritized.

- Advances the overall vision of the Airport.
- Enhances the economic impact of the Airport to the region.
- Supports the regional mindset that the Airport adds significant value to the community.
- Reflects thoughtful financial and environmental sustainability.

### Strategic Objectives:

1. Construct commercial transportation support facilities that will attract scheduled airline services, expand multi-modal transportation options, and positively represent the region.

2. The Airport has exceptional safety and security practices.
3. The Airport has quality, sustainable, and well-maintained facilities.
4. The Airport maintains a well-developed land use plan and leasing policy for a range of aviation activities and business opportunities, characterized by capital improvement projects that reflect the Airport vision.
5. Off-site transportation facilities link seamlessly to the Airport and its flight operations, reflecting its status as a multi-modal transportation hub.
6. The Airport is a catalyst for and supporter of emerging technologies such as sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), electrification of aircraft, air traffic control alternatives, and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).
7. The Airport and its immediate environs house and support businesses that provide and complement aviation services; create jobs and positive economic impact; attract technology, education, and research, and expand workforce skillsets to attract private investment.
8. The Airport is run efficiently and is financially self-sustaining for ongoing operational and maintenance. It is viewed as an asset and is appropriately supported by the FAA, State, County, owner Cities, and the public.
9. The Airport is supported by a team of well-trained, highly motivated, and appropriately compensated employees who operate in an efficient and consistently exceptional manner.
10. The Airport is engaged with the community and views of stakeholders, local businesses, and government entities are carefully considered and appropriately reflected in Airport operations and planning.

A matrix illustrating how these Strategic Objectives support the four Focus Areas can be found in Appendix B.

## **PROJECTS & ACTION ITEMS (2023-2024)**

The following prioritized list of Projects & Action Items for 2023-24 is intended to highlight major projects or initiatives of high impact to the Airport. They describe broadly what needs to be done to address the Strategic Objectives previously mentioned. Generally, they each have a specific start and finish point. Some of these projects can be completed in the two-year period of this plan, while others will be continued into the future as defined in future plans or in updates to this plan. In this section, they are briefly described, to include a short statement of WHY they made this “short list.”

In Part II of this Document, these items are displayed in a matrix which includes specific tasks and relevant information and is intended to track progress. They are listed in the order of their assigned importance at this time. This priority may change at any time in the next two years as circumstances dictate and the Airport Commission approves.

It must be noted that planning and executing the Projects & Action Items listed here comprise only a portion of the Airport staff's, PDSC's, and Airport Commission's time and focus. A significant amount of Airport staff time and resources are dedicated to the safe, secure, and effective operation of the Airport. Airport operations are performed 365 days per year and must meet federal requirements, as well as adapt to seasonal weather conditions and changes in economic circumstances. Additionally, as experience demonstrates, there are always unanticipated requirements that arise without warning and that must be addressed. Though these other continuing requirements are not specifically listed in this plan, they are important and time consuming in their own right and reduce the time available to address these Projects & Action Items.

1. **Remote Tower** - Continue support for the project and FAA certification. Develop contingency plan(s) to ensure that air traffic control is provided at the Airport in the event that the Remote Tower project is unable to achieve operational viability/certification.

*Why did this make the list:* The Remote Tower is essential to airspace safety and efficiency and the return of commercial service. It is a new technology and there are few "champions" of this project outside of the Airport and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Division of Aeronautics. Thus, we need to continue to educate the local public and government authorities at all levels to assure progress toward certification and continued federal funding support. Air traffic control services have been provided since March of 2020 using a temporary tower, resulting in increased safety and efficiency. Going back to being a non-towered airport is not an option. There is no guarantee that the Remote Tower will be a long-term solution, so alternatives need to be considered.



2. **New Terminal** - Finish the design, ensure financing, engage in the construction, and complete the terminal project by July 2024.

*Why did this make the list:* The federal funding for this project (\$17 million) has a firm timeline attached. Deadlines must be met, and funding lined up to complete this

important project. It also provides a strong incentive for the return of commercial air service, will improve the experience of travelers, and impart a “warm Colorado welcome” to visitors.



3. **Commercial Air Service** - Secure a carrier for sustainable, high quality commercial air service.

*Why did this make the list:* Commercial air service is central to long-term sustainability and success of the Airport. The number of travelers seeking commercial air service continues to grow in our region, as does driving time to Denver International Airport. Commercial service at the Airport would benefit the citizens of our region as well as the local economy in general.

4. **Hangar Redevelopment** - Develop a plan for general aviation hangar redevelopment & replacement projects.

*Why did this make the list:* Hangar development and redevelopment are integral to the Airport’s 2020 Master Plan. The experience this past year with an unsolicited proposal, followed by the issuance of an RFP for hangar development created consternation among developers and other Airport stakeholders. That experience has signaled a need for a set of procedures to guide redevelopment and build-out of Airport hangars.

5. **Updated Land Use Plan and Leasing Process** - Develop a comprehensive land use plan that builds off the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) along with an infrastructure plan to encourage development of Airport property. Update policies and procedures for leases of Airport land to eliminate confusion and streamline the approval process.

*Why did this make the list:* Airport Commissioners have expressed the desire for a more detailed land use plan to guide development. The Airport has a relatively new issue of having a lack of shovel-ready land for certain development types, which has been identified as a barrier to new development. Leases for development of Airport property are becoming more frequent, complex, and often contentious. We need to have policies and guidelines that are clear and consistent.



6. **Enhance/Increase Airport Staffing Support** - to meet the Strategic Objectives.

*Why did this make the list:* The Airport staff are the absolute key to achieving everything we hope to accomplish. Staff are the backbone with the expertise, relationships, and focus to accomplish our Objectives. Right now, they are absolutely “maxed out.” We must approach the Projects and Action items realistically in relation to the resources required and resources available.

7. **Runway 15-33 Widening Design & Construction** - Align resources and advocate for federal and state funding.

*Why did this make the list:* The project to widen runway 15-33 (the Airport’s primary runway) is a top priority in the 2023-24 Airport Capital Improvement Project Plan. Funding sources (federal, state, and local) are in place for this project’s design but not yet for the construction. This supports the operation of major commercial aircraft and enhances overall safety of Airport operations. It directly supports flight operations by major commercial carriers who are reluctant to operate from narrower runways.

8. **Governance Study** - Assess the effectiveness of the current governance structure, investigate other models, and provide recommendations.

*Why did this make the list:* Joint municipal ownership, as is the case with FNL, is rare. Since 2015, the Airport has been governed by a commission that was established through an intergovernmental agreement. As the Airport evolves into a regional multimodal transportation hub, it is important to evaluate the capabilities and limitations of this structure and to explore how other structures may be more beneficial to the Airport and Cities.

9. **Multimodal Links to Air Transportation Network** - Advocate for procedural and (if necessary) legislative changes to allow Landline/United passengers to complete security screening at FNL rather than at Denver International, thus facilitating direct transfer to departure gates at Denver.

*Why did this make the list:* Landline service to DIA continues to grow. Securing TSA security access at FNL would drastically reduce customers’ time to get to their gates and create a more convenient and attractive service.

10. **Community Engagement** – Communicate why the Airport is important, how it benefits the region, and what the long-term vision is. Create more promotional and event opportunities to increase the relevance of the Airport to the region (open houses, aviation days, static aviation displays, fly-ins, holiday themed events).

*Why did this make the list:* The Airport is a publicly owned and operated facility. It supports a wide range of aviation activities and businesses. We should promote public awareness of the Airport and how it impacts work, travel, recreation, education, and business of the region.

11. **Technology and Innovation Center** – Engage in partnerships and encourage the

development of a new Technology and Innovation Center on or near Airport property.

*Why did this make the list:* Part of the Airport's vision and mission is to act as a catalyst for innovation and education, particularly supporting aviation-related technology and training. A technology and innovation center supports a wide range of community interests and adds value to the region.

## ***PART II: AIRPORT ACTION PLAN***

### **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The following high-level outcomes are intended to help evaluate the overall success of the plan.

- 1. Remote Tower**  
Critical air traffic control services are sustained at the Airport
- 2. New Terminal**  
The new terminal is constructed and deadlines for the use of federal funding are met
- 3. Commercial Air Service**  
The Airport has a commitment or statement of interest from a commercial air carrier
- 4. Updated Land Use Plan and Leasing Policy**  
Plan and Policy approved by the Airport Commission
- 5. Enhance/Increase Airport Staffing Support**  
Staffing analysis completed and approved by Airport Commission and submitted for budgetary appropriation
- 6. Runway 15-33 Widening Design & Construction**  
Design completed and funding is secured for 2025 construction start
- 7. Governance Study**  
Completed study with options and recommendations & Cities determine best path forward
- 8. Multimodal Links to Air Transportation Network**  
Demonstrate positive trends in multimodal ridership to/from the Airport
- 9. Community Engagement**  
Increased community understanding and support for the vision of the Airport
- 10. Technology and Innovation Center**  
Identify location(s) for facility and partner for a successful implementation
- 11. Hangar Redevelopment**  
Develop and infrastructure plan and create new sites for general aviation hangar development and create a plan to redevelop the T-hangar area

# PART III: APPENDICIES

## APPENDIX A: 2023-2024 CAPITAL PROJECTS

### 2023 ACIP Projects




- 2023**
- 1 New Terminal Construction**
    - Cost: \$18,431,527
    - Funding Sources: Federal – CARES/BIL, State, Local
  - 2 Runway 15-33 Widening Design**
    - Cost: \$666,666
    - Funding Sources: Federal – AIP, State, Local
  - 3 General Aviation Hangar Area Environmental Review**
    - Cost: \$20,000
    - Funding Sources: Local
- Equipment Replacement: Operations Vehicle**
- Cost: \$40,000

### 2024 ACIP Projects




**2024**

- 1 New Terminal Construction**
  - Cost: \$1,111,110
  - Funding Sources: Federal – BIL, State, Local
- 2 Runway 15-33 Widening Construction**
  - Cost: \$13,854,972
  - Funding Sources: Federal – AIP, State, Local
- 3 Taxiway Stearman Upgrades**
  - Cost: \$300,000
  - Funding Sources: Local



- 4 Fuel Farm Capacity Expansion Environmental & Design**
    - Cost: \$250,000
    - Funding Sources: State, Local
  - 5 Taxiway B & D Reconstruct**
    - Cost: \$600,000
    - Funding Sources: Local
  - 6 General Aviation Hangar Area Design & Construction**
    - Cost: \$945,000
    - Funding Sources: Local
- Broom Truck SRE**
- Cost: \$400,000
  - Funding Sources: Local

# APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – FOCUS AREAS MATRIX

 <b>NORTHERN COLORADO REGIONAL AIRPORT</b>		Focus Areas			
		Safe, Secure, & Financially Sustainable Operations	Multi-modal Transportation	Economic Development & Impact	Education, Training, and Innovation
Prioritized Strategic Objectives					
1	Construct commercial transportation support facilities that will attract scheduled airline services, expand multi-modal transportation options, and positively represent the region.				
2	The Airport has exceptional safety and security practices.				
3	The Airport has quality, sustainable, and well-maintained facilities.				
4	The Airport maintains a well-developed land use plan and leasing policy for a range of aviation activities and business opportunities, characterized by capital improvement projects that reflect the Airport vision.				
5	Off-site transportation facilities link seamlessly to the airport and its flight operations, reflecting its status as a multi-modal transportation hub.				
6	The Airport is a catalyst for and supporter of emerging technologies such as sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and electrification of aircraft, air traffic control alternatives, and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).				
7	The Airport and its immediate environs house and support businesses that provide and complement aviation services; create jobs and economic impact; attract technology, education, and research, and expand workforce skillsets to attract private investment.				
8	operational and maintenance. It is viewed as an asset and is appropriately supported by the FAA, State, County, owner Cities, and the public.				
9	The Airport is supported by a team of well-trained, highly motivated, and appropriately compensated employees who operate in an efficient and consistently exceptional manner.				
10	The views of stakeholders, local businesses, and government entities are carefully considered and appropriately reflected in Airport operations and planning.				