

# *PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN (PIP)

On behalf of the Bemidji Regional Airport Authority (or Authority), this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is a guide to gathering public input during the Bemidji Regional Airport Joint Airport Zoning Board (JAZB) process for the Bemidji Regional Airport (BJI or Airport) Zoning Ordinance Update project. This plan empowers information-sharing and collaboration with elected and appointed officials, Airport tenants, representative agencies, the surrounding communities, and all interested persons.

Successful public involvement means that information is shared with stakeholders in through transparent, balanced, and fair process that provides community members, businesses, and other interested parties convenient and meaningful opportunities to participate in the public planning process.

It is essential that the Airport and the JAZB – including representatives of City of Bemidji, City of Wilton, Beltrami County, Northern Township, Grant Valley Township, Bemidji Township, and Eckles Township – understand any issues associated with the pending zoning ordinance revision and take part in the development of the updated code.

Every reasonable effort will be made to provide open lines of stakeholder communication, timely presentations of all Airport Zoning Ordinance Update information in an understandable format, and information accessibility for project stakeholders and the public at large.

The goals of the PIP include the following:

- » To provide stakeholders and the general public with complete, timely, and frequent access to information that allows meaningful participation
- » To create opportunities for members of the public to provide input on actions that could impact their lives
- » To recognize and communicate the needs and interests of all participants
- » To fulfill regulatory requirements for public participation during the zoning ordinance revision process

The PIP provides a high-level process outline for:

- » Availability and location of all Airport Zoning Ordinance Update information
- » Providing early and continuous involvement by Joint Airport Zoning Board representatives, Airport stakeholders, and the general public
- » Seeking and gathering public input.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Bemidji Regional Airport is located in northern Minnesota in Beltrami County. BJI is operated by the Bemidji Regional Airport Authority and is surrounded by six political jurisdictions including City of Bemidji, City of Wilton, Northern Township, Grant Valley Township, Bemidji Township, and Eckles Township. All six

political jurisdictions are within Beltrami County, but the County does not assume zoning authority for Airport-related development. Zoning authority for matters associated with the Airport are handled by the JAZB. This project is designed to assist the BJI JAZB in developing revisions to its Airport Zoning Ordinance to establish custom runway safety zones as defined by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Department of Aeronautics. The State of Minnesota amended Statute 360.0656 in 2019 and the JAZB must revise its custom zone ordinance to reflect the new requirements. This ordinance applies to the City of Bemidji, City of Wilton, Beltrami County, Northern Township, Grant Valley Township, Bemidji Township, and Eckles Township.

The ordinance regulates Land Use Safety Zone Boundaries A and B, which are standards intended to protect people on the ground as well as the Airport, pilots, and passengers. The safety zones serve to assist zoning boards in making decisions that balance the needs of the Airport with the interests of the adjoining property owners.

Anticipated public involvement activities to be accomplished throughout the process of preparing the Airport Zoning Ordinance include:

- » Providing information to the public, airport stakeholders, tenants, and surrounding communities via Airport website content, social media, and print media (as required).
- » Receiving and assessing participant feedback
- » Analyzing proposed impacts to the Airport’s surroundings including:
  - ♦ Land uses
  - ♦ Vulnerable populations
  - ♦ Open spaces
  - ♦ Wildlife attractants
  - ♦ Airspace protection
  - ♦ Social and economic costs
  - ♦ Planned uses
  - ♦ Airport operations

## 2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

This PIP addresses the activities proposed for the public participation and feedback process as described previously. Public participation activities anticipated within the zoning update process and therefore proposed within this PIP include public announcements and legal notices, public hearings, informative web page content, responses to feedback received, social media updates (such as Facebook), and meetings with the JAZB and Airport. All information gathered during public involvement activities will be considered in the development of the Bemidji Regional Airport Zoning Ordinance Update.

**Table 1** presents the types of public involvement activities that will be completed for the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update and the techniques associated with each type of activity.

**TABLE 1**  
**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Public Involvement Activity	
<b>Engaging the Community</b>	<b>Public Hearings</b>
	<b>Public Announcements</b>
<b>Agency Coordination</b>	<b>Teleconferences with BJI</b>
<b>Social Media Networking (Facebook)</b>	
<b>Web Page Development &amp; Online Survey</b>	
<b>JAZB Presentation</b>	

## DIRECT INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

Direct involvement techniques are described below:

- » **Survey:** An online survey may be conducted to obtain community feedback regarding any proposed the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update.
- » **Public Hearing:** Two public hearings will be held to describe the proposed safety zones and solicit public input. The hearing will be held in accordance with MnDOT and Airport requirements, and notices will include instructions for special accommodations and language assistance. The project team will prepare appropriate notices for advertisement of the public hearings. All notices will be distributed and posted to the Airport’s website and print media according to local statutes. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 global health crisis, public hearings may be held either in person, virtually, or both, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. To maximize opportunities for general public participation, those who do not wish to attend a public gathering could attend the hearing by telephone or computer, using Zoom web conferencing software. The web conference will not require software installation or cost to members of the public and will be available to up to 1,000 attendees.
- » **JAZB Presentation:** Two progress meetings/presentations with the JAZB will be held virtually using web conferencing software. The briefings are anticipated to occur toward the midpoint of the study and prior to study completion to provide an overview of the study team’s findings.

As previously mentioned, the BJI JAZB is committed to welcoming input from stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the following:

- » Residents
- » City Council
- » City Boards and Commissions

- » Local Business Owners and Employers
- » Neighborhood Associations
- » Bemidji School Districts
- » Senior Citizens
- » Civic and Social Groups
- » Potential Investors
- » Environmental Groups
- » Advocacy Organizations

### INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION TECHNIQUES

Multiple tools and techniques will be used to engage and inform citizens of the impacted communities throughout the project. Even under any COVID-19 social distancing recommendations, there are ways to keep public engagement efforts inclusive. According to a 2021 Pew Research Center study, 85 percent of Americans currently own a smart phone, meaning all reasonable efforts will be made to make digital outreach efforts compatible with common mobile platforms. Study shows that providing digital outreach platforms helps make receiving and providing information more accessible to individuals who have difficulty attending meetings in-person. The information distribution techniques to be used for the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update are described below:

- » **Notification of General Public:** Mailed notices must be sent at least 10 days before each hearing to all property owners affected within the proposed custom zones not including Zone C. The notice of public hearing must also be published at least three times during the period between 15 days and five days before the hearing. The general public will be notified about public hearings through legal advertisements, the Bemidji Regional Airport website, and social media. It is important for citizens who do not have access to a computer and the Airport's webpage to be provided with hearing notices posted in public locations such as libraries. Adequate instruction will be provided to assist attendance of virtual meetings, as required. Prior to public hearings, public announcements will be placed the Bemidji Pioneer and/or any other print publications deemed necessary.
- » **Web Page Content:** Study content will be provided to the Airport and the JAZB for placement on appropriate web pages, social media, etc. to help inform the public about the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update. An online survey may also be created to identify any stakeholder thoughts/concerns and collect general feedback. Relevant data resulting from the survey may then be shared with the public as appropriate.
- » **Social Media:** Social media networking opportunities for the project will be provided using Facebook. It is recommended Airport staff provide social media updates to ensure proper timing and flow of information. Social media should be limited to disseminating information about the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update, including reminders about the public hearing and any project milestones that may be identified by Bemidji Regional Airport staff. Integrating social media links into the Bemidji Regional Airport website and the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update project web page will allow the public to easily follow developments.

## ACTION PLAN

The primary purpose of the public outreach process is to understand and respond to potential stakeholder thoughts/concerns regarding the Airport zoning update and identify community opportunities associated with long-range planning for Bemidji Regional Airport. The following describes preliminary strategies for executing the previously outlined PIP techniques.

- » **Presentations, Maps, and Graphics:** The project team will develop presentations, graphic materials (including maps), and prepare and distribute an Airport Zoning Update report. The project team will provide narrative content for the placement of public announcements for public hearings as well as on the Airport website. It is anticipated that other local media notifications would be made by the Airport per normal public hearing protocols.

Notice will precede the public hearing. Hearing time and date will be published no later than two weeks prior to the day of the event in the Bemidji Pioneer.

- » **Web Page Content for Bemidji Regional Airport:** Web page content to be included on the Airport's website will be designed and maintained over the course of this project. Protocol for providing updated materials by the project team will be established with the Airport. Web page content will be created by the project team for the Airport to host on its public website (<https://www.bemidjiairport.org/>).

Website content must be submitted 10 days in advance of public hearings in order to publish public hearing information on the Airport webpage. Examples of content that can be included on the Airport website include:

- ♦ Airport Zoning Ordinance Update documents made available for public review (or links to documents)
- ♦ Methods for providing comment (email, survey, or form submission)
- ♦ Description and dates of public hearings
- ♦ Any other public announcements associated with the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update
- ♦ Frequently Asked Question section (samples below):
  - Why is the Airport completing a zoning ordinance update?
  - What is an airport zoning ordinance?
  - How can I comment on the zoning ordinance update?
  - Why is it needed? What are the benefits of this ordinance?
  - What are the boundaries of this project, what property will be affected?
  - Will this ordinance replace the existing zoning classification of property?
  - Will this project involve modifying existing limitations including height?
  - Does this project include plans to construct or extend any runways at the airport?

All content and graphics will be reviewed and approved by the Airport prior to it being loaded onto the web page. Public comments can be submitted and received through an online form on the Airport web site, and then compiled and provided to the Airport and JAZB for consideration at appropriate times in the study process.

- » **Public Hearings:** Public hearings for the Airport zoning code update will be held in the early evening hours on a weekday. The hearing will be staffed by representatives of the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update team who can describe the changes to individuals or small groups. Public comments and questions will be addressed by the Board. Provisions will be made for documenting accepted comments.

### 3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

A tentative project schedule has been developed for the public involvement portions of the Airport Zoning Ordinance Update. Please note that dates for specific meetings and public involvement activities are approximate and subject to change pending guidance from the Airport and JAZB.

**TABLE 2**  
**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE**

<b>Outreach Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
<b>JAZB Meetings</b>	Anticipated Summer 2022
<b>Commissioner Meeting</b>	Anticipated Fall/Winter 2022
<b>Public Hearings</b>	Anticipated Spring 2023
<b>Web Page Development &amp; Maintenance</b>	Ongoing
<b>Social Media Posts &amp; Updates</b>	Ongoing