

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) represents a gateway to western New York State and portions of southeastern Ontario, Canada including the Greater Buffalo and Niagara Falls region. As such, the airport is considered as a cornerstone for economic development in the Niagara Falls area. The airport is a well-planned and managed facility that offers a variety of passenger, military and general aviation services.

Recognizing the importance and potential of NFIA as an economic asset to the surrounding community, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), which oversees NFIA, commenced this update of the previous master plan prepared in 1994. In addition to the previous master planning efforts, NFTA leadership has identified the importance of incorporating sustainability into all phases of the planning effort; resulting in a new Sustainable Master Plan. Funded through grants provided by the Federal Aviation Administration, New York State Department of Transportation, and Empire State Development, the primary goal of this Sustainable Master Plan is to develop a realistic approach that will guide the development of the airport well into the future in a sustainable manner. The sustainable master planning process also seeks to gain the public's support of proposed improvements and afford the public an opportunity to comment on the future of the airport.

Fundamental changes continue to shape the aviation industry and socioeconomic forces such as the regional and Canadian economy have the potential to affect demand at NFIA. The Sustainable Master Plan involves reviewing airport facilities and interests in light of these industry changes to ensure that the airport is able to respond to fluctuations in traffic and the aviation needs of the region.

The scope of work for the project proceeds through the Inventory and Forecasting process, and then evaluates airport needs based upon current and future demand. After documenting the airport needs; the plan identifies and analyzes development alternatives. The project culminates in the preparation of an Airport Layout Plan Drawing Set, which illustrates future development and serves as the airport's official planning document. Sustainable elements will be reviewed and incorporated throughout the planning process with findings and recommendations identified and described.

### 1.2 MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The NFTA has developed an overall mission statement for the services the Authority provides to the region. Beyond that, each facility operated by NFTA also has specific goals in order to achieve the overall mission statement of the Authority. NFTA's mission statement is presented below:

*The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority is a multi-modal entity encompassing a skilled and dedicated workforce. We are firmly committed to providing efficient and professional transportation services that enhance the*

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*quality of life in the Buffalo Niagara region in a manner consistent with the needs of our customers.*

*Aviation: serves as a catalyst for economic growth by maintaining cost effective, customer oriented, and efficient airports to attract and retain comprehensive and competitive air transportation services.*

*Surface: enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors by providing the highest level of safe, clean, affordable, responsive, and reliable transportation through a coordinated and convenient bus and rail system.*

*Property: manage and develop the NFTA owned real property to optimize the generation of self-supporting discretionary revenue to support our transportation businesses while fostering economic growth.*

*Support services: proactively provide high quality, coordinated, innovative, technological, cost-effective support service solutions for our internal and external stakeholders.*

For NFIA, the specific objectives include:

- *Provide airside infrastructure that meets FAA standards and enhances the efficiency and access for users of NFIA*
- *Operate first class passenger terminal facilities in a manner which makes customer service the hallmark of the operation but still maximizes returns to the Authority.*
- *Position NFIA to become an even stronger economic catalyst for the Greater Niagara Falls region.*
- *Identify sustainable initiatives that allow NFIA to minimize environmental impacts and potential cost savings from reduced resource and energy consumption*

NFIA is proud of the services provided to the region and continues to focus on enhancing air service as well as providing world class and customer friendly facilities.

### 1.3 KEY ITEMS OF THIS SUSTAINABLE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

As presented above, NFIA focus is to enhance the facility and services to the Greater Niagara Falls region. With tremendous development potential, this master plan update will address optimizing airfield recommendations to promote landside and support facility investments as well as increased sustainability. Key elements and considerations in this master plan include:

#### **Passenger Terminal Area**

At the commencement of this master plan, scheduled passenger service was in its infancy, following a long period of intermittent service. While the current passenger service profile has been stable there are numerous opportunities and uncertainties going forward. This master plan considers potential growth scenarios their impact to not only the passenger terminal building but also the associated roadway network and auto parking lots.

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### General Aviation

The current FBO site shares an apron with the new passenger terminal and is located across a runway from other general aviation users and facilities; beyond that, the lack of a facility plan for general aviation has resulted in limited investment in general aviation facilities over the past decade. This master plan establishes a long term plan for general aviation investment that establishes a consolidated general aviation development area.

### Airside Infrastructure

The existing airside infrastructure lacks an efficient taxi route for aircraft accessing both the general aviation and passenger terminal areas. The lack of taxiway infrastructure combined with a notable amount of abandoned pavements combine to create the need for a robust taxiway program that will enhance the safety and efficiency of aircraft operations and also open up new areas for development by providing currently vacant parcels with airside access.

### Economic Development

Existing land surrounding the airport has the opportunity to serve as an economic development catalyst for the Greater Niagara Falls area. This master plan identifies areas best suited for economic development that are consistent with both the airport's primary functions of safe and efficient operations, and also surrounding land uses. General aviation development plans discussed and identified in this master plan depict the maximum build-out scenario and allow for parcel development to suit users and developers of all sizes. In addition to general aviation, the master plan specifically identifies a location for potential air cargo facilities to be located on the airport should demand materialize over the planning period. Like general aviation, these facilities depict a maximum build out that is consistent and complements the broader vision for the airport.

### Sustainability

Sustainability has become a major consideration within communities, states and throughout nation over the past several years. Sustainable practices are actively used in redevelopment efforts in towns and cities as well as in new development. The aviation industry also embraces sustainable practices as many airports are beginning to develop sustainability plans that address a number of actions that are intended to reduce energy costs, recycle wastes generated at the airport, and reduce green house gases, to name a few.

The NFTA recognizes the importance of sustainability and as a result, NFIA has collaborated with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to incorporate a sustainability element as part of this master plan. This is one of the first master plans in the FAA's Eastern Region to incorporate a sustainability element into the master planning process. In order to develop a sustainable plan, a distinct sustainability focused meeting was held at the beginning of the project a bring together NFTA staff, airlines, and other tenants to discuss sustainable practices that are currently practiced at the airport and look at other future practices that can be implemented to reduce NFIA's overall impact on the environment. The resulting discussions generated a number of ideas that NFIA can assess and implement for both the short term as well as the long term.

The following chapters present the technical analysis to address the elements summarized above.