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DIA inks \$84 million in contracts to start major planning for 7th runway

Construction is still years away, but project would result in one of largest U.S. airfields



David Zalubowski, The Associated Press

A Frontier Airlines jetliner taxis down a runway at Denver International Airport on Wednesday, June 10, 2020.

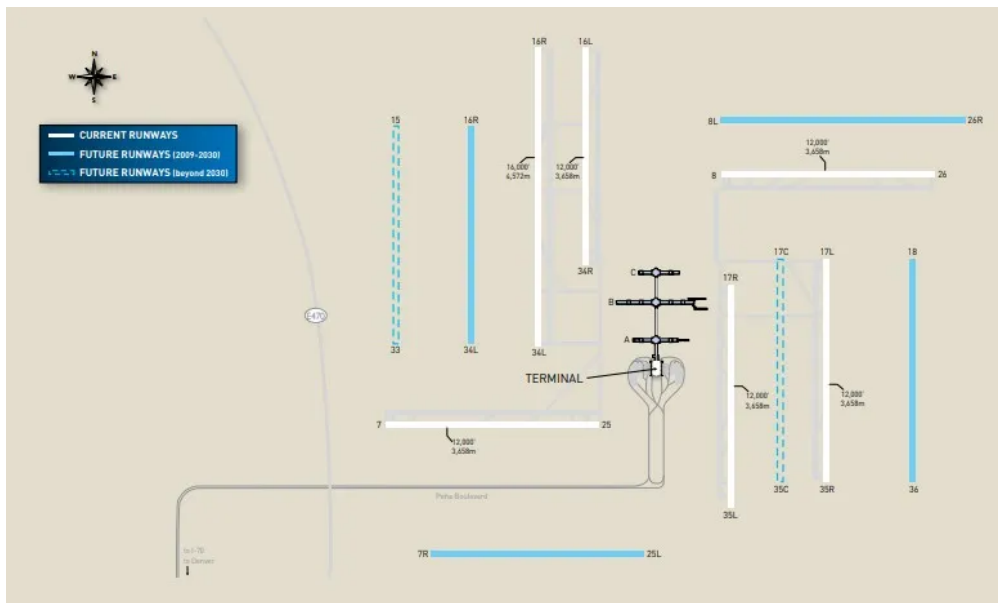


Denver International Airport's [plans for a seventh runway](#) received a green light from city leaders Monday to begin the environmental review phase — a major step that would tee up the project for federal approval and funding.

The Denver City Council, in a block vote, approved three contracts worth up to \$83.5 million that will guide that review as well as preliminary designs. If the Federal Aviation Administration signs off, the seventh runway wouldn't open for takeoffs and landings until late 2028, according to the project schedule in a DIA briefing document.

It would be the first runway built at DIA since 2003 on an airfield that has room for up to 12 of them. A seventh runway would tie DIA with Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport's current number and would rank it just behind O'Hare International Airport's eight active runways in Chicago, the most of any U.S. commercial airport.

But such an undertaking would be costly, with a price tag for final design and construction projected to reach \$1.2 billion. It's unclear how much of that would be shouldered by the federal government.



Screenshot from DIA master plan

A decade-old master plan produced by Denver International Airport plotted out potential locations for future new runways. Six existing runways are shaded white, with



The contracts approved Monday are nearly \$46 million for Jacobs Engineering Group for design consulting, \$22.5 million for AECOM Technical Services for project management and \$15 million for HNTB Corporation to conduct an environmental assessment or a more in-depth environmental impact statement. The review will include runway placement options.

The contracts ended up costing about twice what DIA projected before the bid process began.

Some of the planning also will lay the groundwork for a potential eighth runway when it's needed, airport officials told council members during a recent briefing. DIA is recovering from the pandemic more quickly than most U.S. airports and soon could resume its long-standing growth streak.

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