

Submitted Comments for:

Date: Oct. 29, 2024

Final Assessment Forest Plan Revision

Infrastructure Detailed Report

I've added verbiage in **RED** type within areas of the above report for your consideration to include aviation infrastructure and access in this Forest Planning process.

Infrastructure

Introduction

(3rd Paragraph)

The history of transportation and facilities development on national forests in the Blue Mountains is primarily related to extractive resource management activities such as mining and logging. Many roads were located directly adjacent to streams and rivers for ease of construction and to provide access for land use activities associated with water such as placer mining, cattle watering, water diversion, and log floating to sawmills. **Airstrips on forests were established for mining exploration, access to cattle grazing areas, and fire control.** Lode mining necessitated the construction of roads and railroads to haul ores. Logging operations provided the necessary building materials for mining activities and often required additional roads.

(5th Paragraph)

Once constructed, roads **and airstrips** provided access for other uses, including viewing scenery, camping, hunting, grazing, and gathering forest products, such as berries and firewood. Many trails within the national forests evolved from game trails, early American Indian hunting trails, and livestock herding trails, or those that were constructed by early recreation users. These trails were constructed to access and connect remote features and destinations, such as remote lakes, hunting and fishing areas, and scenic viewpoints. Most national forest trails **and airstrips** are in dispersed and backcountry recreation areas.

Current Management Direction

(1st Paragraph)

Transportation: Provide and manage a safe and economical road, **airstrip**, and trail system and facilities needed to accomplish the land and resource management and protection objectives of the forest

Existing Condition

Transportation Infrastructure

Table 1. Miles of National Forest System roads by operational maintenance level by Forest and the total miles on each forest.

National Forest	ML 1	ML 2	ML 3	ML 4	ML 5	Total
Malheur	3888	5203	327	0	0	9420
Umatilla	2176	1821	268	61	68	4396
Wallowa-Whitman	4255	3513	231	6	73	8079
Total Miles	10,320	10,538	827	67	141	21,895

All road mileages are approximate.

On the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa Whitman National Forests there are 38, 26, and 50 bridges and 1, 1, and 3 air strips, respectively. *(This matches Table 2 under Recreation Infrastructure)*

Key Benefits to People

(3rd Paragraph)

Infrastructure on the national forests include National Forest System roads, trails, airstrips, bridges, public utilities, private infrastructure, recreation facilities, drinking water systems, dams, and administrative facilities. This infrastructure is an essential input in economic activity in the region. Recreational use of the national forests relies on accessible roads, trails, *airstrips* and developed sites. Households and industries rely on cellular towers, water developments, pipelines, and transmission lines to conduct their business. Like water, forest infrastructure is not a separate category in the economic contribution analysis because it is embedded in nearly all market transactions associated with forest uses. Timber cannot be removed from the forest for processing without National Forest System roads. Recreational visitors will not spend money in communities near the national forests if they cannot access preferred recreational sites. New families and businesses will not move to the communities surrounding the forest if they lack access to infrastructure essential to modern life.

(4th Paragraph)

The road system on the national forests contributes to connecting people and communities to the national forest and to each other. The Blue Mountains National Forests' road systems support numerous recreation opportunities. Road mileage can be used as an indicator of recreation opportunities, including driving for pleasure, which is one of the more popular outdoor recreation activities on the national forests. Roads *and airstrips* provide access to dispersed recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. Roads also serve as recreation sites for individuals who use off-highway vehicles and bikes on National Forest System roads.

Trends and Drivers

Include a second paragraph after paragraph 1:

A trend has been gaining popularity since the 1990 Plan came into existence which is recreational aviation. Since 2015, Congress has specified that \$750,000 of Forest Service appropriations be designated to airstrip maintenance . Both State and National Pilot Associations provide volunteer time and money for needed airstrip maintenance.

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Recreation Setting, Opportunities, Access & Scenic Character

I've added verbiage in *RED* type within areas of the above report for your consideration to include aviation infrastructure and access in this Forest Planning process.

Dispersed Recreation

(1st Paragraph)

Dispersed recreation settings offer a broad array of opportunities to users who require few developed site amenities. National forest dispersed campsites, off-highway vehicle trailheads, *airstrips* and wayside interpretive sites are examples of minimally developed facilities that are rustic in nature yet appeal to those wanting to be more self-sufficient. The sites lack plumbing, paved surfaces, or potable water sources found in the developed recreation setting. These areas are accessed via secondary or primitive roads and trails or airstrips. Scenic and recreation river corridors also occur within this setting. Many activities occur here that people associate with a primitive or self-reliant dispersed activity. Peak periods can occur during fall hunting seasons when larger groups tend to congregate for hunting in traditional locations. During the rest of the year, campsites and activities are more dispersed, and social encounters tend to be infrequent.

Backcountry Recreation

(2nd Paragraph)

Backcountry recreation occurs in the least developed setting and provides the greatest opportunity for solitude, risk, and challenge in environments of rugged, undeveloped landscapes. These landscapes are often deep, isolated canyons, heavily forested plateaus, and rocky ridgelines. There are minimal facilities, creating more self-reliance and challenge for visitors. Facilities, which are considered rustic or primitive in nature, such as information or direction signs, rustic toilets, and trails, may be found. *Many existing airstrips provide access to trails that can't be accessed by other motorized vehicles.* In roaded backcountry, secondary roads provide access to small trailheads with only minimal directional signage. Trails for motor vehicle use and trails where motor vehicle use is prohibited are available in some areas but are not always open or maintained. Activities available in these areas, such as hunting and fishing, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle riding, recreational aviation, trail riding and stock packing, and river boating and rafting, often require self-reliance and higher levels of outdoor skills.

Roads, Trails and Airstrip Access

(insert as a new paragraph after paragraph 3)

Funding for airstrips comes from annually appropriated funds (\$750,000 annually since 2015) and maintenance is performed in collaboration with both State and National Aviation Associations and the USFS. The Wallowa Whitman Forest, in collaboration with State and National Aviation Associations has created an Airstrip Integrated Operations and Maintenance Plan to ensure the safe operation at airstrips by both the public and management agencies.

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Land Ownership, Uses, and Access Patterns

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Existing Condition

Access

(1st Paragraph)

Access via roads, trails **and airstrips** through the national forests has a long history in the Blue Mountains. Trails and migration routes date back to prehistoric times. American Indian migration routes are well documented through the stories of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, Nez Perce, Warm Springs, and others. Many ancient routes are the basis for roads, portions of roads, or trails that are in use today. Trails within the national forests also contributed to 1800s western migration as expeditions passed through the Blue Mountains. One of the most notable routes is the original Oregon Trail.

(2nd Paragraph)

The history of development for the road system on national forests in the Blue Mountains is primarily related to extractive resource management activities such as mining and logging. Many roads were located directly adjacent to streams and rivers for ease of construction and to provide access for land use activities associated with water such as placer mining, cattle watering, water diversion, and log floating to sawmills. **Airstrips on forests were established for mining exploration, access to cattle grazing areas, and fire control.**

(3rd Paragraph)

Prior to the development of the road system, railroads provided primary access into the Blue Mountains National Forests. Railroad logging can be traced as far back as 1901. Some railroad grades were later converted to vehicle roads. Additional roads were constructed to connect communities and for fire management and administrative access to the national forests. Once constructed, roads **and airstrips** provided access for other uses, including viewing scenery, camping, hunting, grazing, and gathering forest products, such as berries and firewood.

Trends and Drivers

(insert as a new paragraph after paragraph 4)

Funding for airstrips comes from annually appropriated funds (\$750,000 annually since 2015) and maintenance is performed in collaboration with both State and National Aviation Associations and the USFS. The Wallowa Whitman Forest, in collaboration with State and National Aviation Associations has created an Airstrip Integrated Operations and Maintenance Plan to ensure the safe operation at airstrips by both the public and management agencies.

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Socioeconomic Assessment Report in Support of the Malheur National
Forest Assessment

Benefits to People (including multiple uses, other forest benefits,
operations and infrastructure)

Forest Operations and Infrastructure

(1st Paragraph)

Malheur National Forest operations and infrastructure include personnel, program activities, roads, *airstrips* and facilities that contribute to the use and enjoyment of the forest.

(6th Paragraph)

Infrastructure on the Malheur National Forest includes National Forest System roads, trails, *airstrips*, bridges, public utilities, private infrastructure, recreation facilities, drinking water systems, dams, and administrative facilities. Forest infrastructure is an essential input in economic activity in the region. Recreational use of the Malheur National Forest relies on accessible roads, trails, and developed sites. Households and industries rely on cellular towers, water developments, pipelines, and transmission lines to conduct their business. Like water, forest infrastructure is not a separate category in the economic contribution analysis because it is embedded in nearly all market transactions associated with forest uses. Timber cannot be removed from the forest for processing without National Forest System (NFS) roads. Recreational visitors will not spend money in communities near the Malheur National Forest if they cannot access preferred recreational sites. New families and businesses will not move to the communities surrounding the forest if they lack access to infrastructure essential to modern life.

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Socioeconomic Assessment Report in Support of the Umatilla National
Forest Assessment

Benefits to People (including multiple uses, other forest benefits,
operations and infrastructure)

Forest Operations and Infrastructure

(1st Paragraph)

Umatilla National Forest operations and infrastructure include personnel, program activities, roads, *airstrips* and facilities that contribute to the use and enjoyment of the forest.

(6th Paragraph)

Infrastructure on the Umatilla National Forest includes National Forest System roads, trails, *airstrips*, bridges, public utilities, private infrastructure, recreation facilities, drinking water systems, dams, and administrative facilities. Forest infrastructure is an essential input in economic activity in the region. Recreational use of the Umatilla National Forest relies on accessible roads, trails, and developed sites. Households and industries rely on cellular towers, water developments, pipelines, and transmission lines to conduct their business. Like water, forest infrastructure is not a separate category in the economic contribution analysis because it is embedded in nearly all market transactions associated with forest uses. Timber cannot be removed from the forest for processing without National Forest System (NFS) roads. Recreational visitors will not spend money in communities near the Umatilla National Forest if they cannot access preferred recreational sites. New families and businesses will not move to the communities surrounding the forest if they lack access to infrastructure essential to modern life.

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Socioeconomic Assessment Report in Support of the
Wallowa Whitman National Forest Assessment

Benefits to People (including multiple uses, other forest benefits,
operations and infrastructure)

Forest Operations and Infrastructure

(1st Paragraph)

Wallowa Whitman National Forest operations and infrastructure include personnel, program activities, roads, *airstrips* and facilities that contribute to the use and enjoyment of the forest.

(6th Paragraph)

Infrastructure on the Wallowa Whitman National Forest includes National Forest System roads, trails, *airstrips*, bridges, public utilities, private infrastructure, recreation facilities, drinking water systems, dams, and administrative facilities. Forest infrastructure is an essential input in economic activity in the region. Recreational use of the Wallowa Whitman National Forest relies on accessible roads, trails, and developed sites. Households and industries rely on cellular towers, water developments, pipelines, and transmission lines to conduct their business. Like water, forest infrastructure is not a separate category in the economic contribution analysis because it is embedded in nearly all market transactions associated with forest uses. Timber cannot be removed from the forest for processing without National Forest System (NFS) roads. Recreational visitors will not spend money in communities near the Wallowa Whitman National Forest if they cannot access preferred recreational sites. New families and businesses will not move to the communities surrounding the forest if they lack access to infrastructure essential to modern life.

Submitted Comments for:

Final Assessment Report of Ecological, Social and Economic Conditions
on the Malhuer, Umatilla & Wallowa Whitman National Forests

Recreation Settings and Opportunities

Dispersed Recreation

(1st Paragraph)

Dispersed recreation settings offer a broad array of opportunities to users who require few developed site amenities. Visitors often seek this setting to participate in activities such as hiking, hunting, backpacking, stock packing, gathering forest products, *recreational aviation*, biking, off-highway vehicle riding, fishing, and viewing scenery and wildlife. Outfitter and guides also provide commercial services for hunting, fishing, day rides, and river boating and rafting.

(2nd Paragraph)

National forest dispersed campsites, off-highway vehicle trailheads, *airstrips* and wayside interpretive sites are examples of minimally developed facilities that are rustic in nature yet appeal to those wanting to be more self-sufficient. The sites lack plumbing, paved surfaces, or potable water sources found in developed recreation setting. These areas are accessed via secondary or primitive roads and trails, and airstrips. Scenic and recreation river corridors also occur within this setting. Peak periods can occur during fall hunting seasons when larger groups tend to congregate for hunting in traditional locations. During the rest of the year, campsites and activities are more dispersed, and social encounters tend to be infrequent.

Respectively Submitted

Bill Ables

