

AUS Airplane Fuel Facility

Frequently Asked Questions



What is an airplane fuel storage facility?

- An airplane fuel storage facility, also known as a Jet-A fuel facility or aviation fuel facility, is where Jet-A fuel is offloaded and stored. These facilities are critical because they provide airplanes with the fuel needed to fly, allowing planes to transport people, goods, and vital cargo. Since opening in 1999, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport has had one main fuel facility next to the Barbara Jordan Terminal.

Why does AUS need a new fuel storage facility?

- Fuel farms are the safest and most efficient way to store and supply aviation fuel to multiple users at an airport. A new fuel storage facility with more capacity is needed at AUS to meet near, and long-term growth as airlines expand their service. The current facility is the original two-tank facility that opened with the airport in 1999. At that time, just over 3 million passengers flew out of AUS. The year before the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, AUS set a new annual passenger record: 17,343,729 people traveling through the airport in 2019. The airport forecasts a return to 2019 passenger volumes in 2022.
- Most airports average a 5–7-day fuel supply, and AUS currently has a 2–3-day supply, which doesn't account for expanded air service this spring or any future new flights.

Where will the new fuel storage facility be located?

- The new fuel storage facility site is on airport property on the northbound side of US 183, between McCall Lane and Metropolis Drive. This location was selected during the airport's 2040 Master Plan development.

Why was this location selected?

- As the airport grows, support facility improvements will be located where they best fit to assist future airfield, terminal, and landside development.
- The proposed site is the safest, best fit because it doesn't conflict with future airport development, like a third runway, realigned taxiways, cargo operations, general aviation operations, new midfield concourses, and is compatible with land-use code.
- It will utilize the existing fuel storage facility to provide a safe, reliable fuel source for airlines operating at AUS. The two facilities will connect through an underground transfer line.

How close is the proposed fuel facility to homes and businesses?

Distances are measured from furthest edge of tanks to closest edge of a structure, not the property line:

- Tank 1 is 622 feet from the nearest businesses and 743 feet from the nearest home
- Tank 2 is 522 feet from the nearest businesses and 640 feet from the nearest home
- Tank 3 is 446 feet from the nearest businesses and 558 feet from the nearest home
- Tank 4 is 390 feet from the nearest businesses and 488 feet from the nearest home

When are the tanks scheduled to be built?

- It is anticipated that construction for Phase 1 of the facility will start in spring 2022, with completion expected within two years.

What kind of operations will happen at the new facility?

- Operations at the new facility will be limited compared to the existing one. The current fuel storage facility is where airplane fuel delivery trucks will fill up, and the new fuel storage tanks will receive fuel delivered to the airport by trucks.
- Long-term plans include closing the existing fuel facility and using underground transfer lines to connect the new facility directly to the terminal and future midfield concourse for hydrant fueling operations.
- Phase one of the fuel storage facility's operations includes two tanks, and phase 2 plans call for a third and fourth tank to be added to the site. The additional tanks are long-term, 15 – 20-year plans.

What was the process for approving the new facility?

- The fuel storage facility's design went through an extensive review process by several different agencies. An environmental review evaluated all potential environmental impacts. The information from this review was presented to the Federal Aviation Administration, which approved the project in 2020. The FAA also approved the overall 2040 Master Plan in 2019.
- The storage facility has met other federal requirements and has a federally approved Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan, a Facility Response Plan, and a Construction Safety Phasing Plan.
- The facility has also met State of Texas requirements. It has an approved Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, which meets the necessary stormwater permits for construction and operations, an approved Air Permit, an approved Hydrostatic Test General Permit for underground piping, and more.
- The facility also meets City of Austin standards. It has approved permits for site development, building, electric, mechanical, plumbing, fire suppression, and wastewater, along with an approved Hazardous Materials Storage Permit from the Austin Fire Department.

Is Jet-A fuel like gasoline?

- No. Jet-A fuel has low volatility, low combustibility, and lets off fewer emissions compared to gasoline. Jet-A fuel does not ignite or catch fire easily.

Will the new facility have safety features?

- Yes. The new site will be staffed 24/7, with security and a CCTV system, security lighting, and a security-controlled access gate with 10-foot fencing that exceeds regular Federal Aviation Administration and Transportation Security Administration standards.
- The storage tanks' safety features include high and low-level sensors and alarms, a leak detection system, a lined spill containment system, and firefighting equipment that will automatically deploy in the event of a fire. The airport is also staffed 24/7 with on-site Austin Police Department officers and Austin Fire Department personnel who operate the Aircraft Fire and Rescue station located on the airport property.
- The fuel storage site must meet all established safety requirements and pass inspections regularly. These inspections are done by the City of Austin, airline partners, airport officials, and others.

How does the facility impact air quality?

- The facility's Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) air permit does not allow it to exceed 25 tons of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emissions each year. The proposed fuel storage facility (Phase 1) emissions are projected to be 3.6 tons of VOC per year from the two tanks.
- The existing facility emits approximately 4.3 tons of VOCs
 - Includes 1.9 tons of Jet-A VOCs from airplane refueling operations
 - Airplane refueling operations will not occur at the new facility
- Emissions from the tank or offload process become diluted in the air once it gets past about 200 feet.
- AUS is committed to making sure emissions do not exceed the allowable amount. The airport will require the airlines to monitor emissions from the tanks and have the air quality data validated by an independent air quality expert.
- The City of Austin Department of Aviation will review the air quality data to ensure emissions do not exceed the allowed amount of 25 tons of VOC per year.

How were community members first notified about this project?

- Information about the fuel storage facility project and the selected site was included in outreach and community engagement efforts in when the airport announced and informed the greater Austin community about the future of AUS, the 2040 Master Plan.
- Four Public Workshops were held before the Master Plan was finalized in 2019. The workshops were promoted on the airport's website, invitations were mailed to nearby residents and businesses in coordination with the District 2 Council office, and yard signs publicizing the workshops were put up in nearby neighborhoods.
- The City of Austin also sent mailed notices to property owners within 500 feet of the center of the site during the construction permitting process.
- The City of Austin Department of Aviation joined District 2 Council staff in October and November 2021 for two community meetings. Information about the project, the 2040 Master Plan, long-term airport development plans, the fuel facility's selected location, safety features, layout, and design were presented.

What about the health and safety of those in homes and businesses near the proposed new fuel facility?

- The airport takes the health and safety of its neighbors very seriously. The Airport Expansion and Development Plan (AEDP) carefully balances our obligation to improve AUS and create safe, modern facilities that exceed our customers' expectations while ensuring airport-adjacent communities are represented in the planning process.
- The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) requires a Spill control and response plan that meets federal standards.
- The fuel storage facility will be regularly inspected by the City of Austin Department of Aviation, the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department, and the airline consortium that oversees its operation.
- AUS is committed to making sure emissions do not exceed the allowable amount. The City of Austin Department of Aviation will request the airline consortium provide their monthly air quality reports for review to ensure air quality thresholds are not exceeding the allowed limit.
- The City of Austin Department of Aviation will also request the airline consortium install air-monitoring equipment onto the storage tanks and have the air quality data validated by an independent expert.
- The site also has to meet State and City requirements for water quality considerations.
- AUS will make sure the site maintains best practices and safe operations. Airport staff will regularly inspect the site to look for any signs of leaks, rusts, cracked concrete.

What environmental impact reviews were completed before the new fuel storage facility was approved, and how will it be monitored in the future?

- A Focused Environmental Assessment (EA) was done by an independent consultant, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and guided by the FAA to document and evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from the fuel storage facility upgrade. The EA included a review of Environmental Justice issues; the consultant found that "environmental justice impacts are not anticipated."
- The FAA approved the Focused EA on April 8, 2020.
- The fuel storage facility will be regularly inspected by the City of Austin Department of Aviation, the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department, and the airline consortium that oversees its operation.
- The City of Austin Department of Aviation will require the airlines to provide their monthly air quality reports for review to ensure air quality thresholds are not exceeding the allowed limit.
- In addition to all legally required inspections, the airport will hire third-party air and water quality experts to independently validate air quality data and review annual water quality reports.

If a new fuel storage facility is not built, what will happen?

- The new fuel storage facility would provide a desperately needed, safe, reliable fuel supply to support domestic airline and cargo operations at AUS.
- If the facility isn't built as planned, the airport will regularly issue fuel shortage alerts which means airlines flying to AUS will be forced to carry extra fuel when flying, putting a strain on aviation fueling systems at other airports. AUS passengers could experience diversions and canceled or delayed flights, and airport cargo operations could be impacted.
- Our airport is a powerful economic engine for our local economy, and it supports the growth and economic vitality of our City. An unreliable fuel supply could result in the loss of new domestic and international routes and not enough flights to support the City's many annual events and festivals.