

# MAIN REPORT

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR) International Airport is the only gateway for air traffic to Mauritius. In 2011 more than 2.67 million passengers transited through the Airport, and over 19,800 aircraft movements were recorded. In 2003 / 2004 an update of the Master Plan for the SSR Airport was undertaken due to a variety of factors, including revised traffic forecasts and the introduction of new opportunities in the development of the airport<sup>1</sup>. The updated estimates predict a minimum of 4.55 million passengers per annum for 2022<sup>2</sup>. As for air cargo the forecast indicates 74,000t in 2020 and 87,000t in 2025<sup>3</sup>.

Based on the recommendations of the updated Airport Master Plan, the owner and operator of the airport - Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd. (AML<sup>4</sup>) - meanwhile implemented or is in the state of implementing a number of key components in the phased development of airport facilities such as

- A new (parallel) taxiway of strategic importance, as it ensures that airport operations can continue in case the main runway is closed;
- The new passenger terminal designed for a capacity of 4 million passengers which is operational since September 2013;
- The construction of a new cargo and freeport zone (CFZ) that will cater for the expected long term development of cargo volumes<sup>5</sup>.

To date, the SSR International Airport is connected with the conurbation by the M1 motorway. From the M1, a dual carriageway enters the airport area from the west to end at the roundabout giving access to the airport facilities.

The existing road through the village of Plaine Magnien gives rise to road safety issues due to, inter alia, proximity of housing and commercial activities. Space for improving the geometry of the said road to enhance safety is rather limited.

Increase in airport traffic arising from both increase in number of passengers and freight, and expected substantial traffic from planned urban developments in the region have led the AML to fund a new road project that will not only provide for the handling of such increase in traffic but , at the same time, provide for an alternative access to and from the airport – security that does not exist at present.

The road is being implemented as the predicted increase in volume of cargo traffic will also pose a serious traffic hazard in Plaine Magnien village, especially the small round about.

The proposed road will be far from residences and existing commercial activities, will enable separation of local / regional traffic and will provide a backbone for further urban / economic development that the existing road cannot provide. The local road will eventually serve a more local function.

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<sup>1</sup> Masterplan for Sir Seewoosagur Rangoolam International Airport; AML 2004

<sup>2</sup> Data relate to the 'Base Case'

<sup>3</sup> Infrastructure Layout Planning of the New Air Cargo and Freeport Zones at Mauritius International Airport, Final Technical Report. Lufthansa Consulting, Sept. 2010

<sup>4</sup> AML is the owner and operator of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR) International Airport. The Government of Mauritius is the major shareholder of AML

<sup>5</sup> The EIA licence for the implementation of this component was issued in December 2013 and construction is scheduled to start in 2014

Further, a 400 ha urban development scheme coming up in the nearby *Mon Trésor* area is expected to generate additional traffic in the medium to long term<sup>6</sup>. If no alternative road is provided on time the existing airport access road would soon be impacted by the combined traffic loads of airport operations and significant new traffic loads as generated by the *Mon Trésor* project. Further, such scenario is likely to add to already existing road safety problems on this part of the M1, especially in the neighbourhood of the roundabout in *Plaine Magnien Village*. However, conditions at this site do not allow for an effective solution to alleviate that 'black spot' on the existing airport access.

Given above, and to provide for an alternative access (presently non-existent) to and from the airport, AML, in collaboration with the Road Development Authority (RDA), has decided to develop a New Airport Access Road (the 'Project') connecting the southern part of the airport with the M1. The Project is designed such as to support the needs of both the visions for the further development of SSR International Airport and other neighbouring / regional developments.

The key objectives of this approach are

- To improve access to the new terminal building and the new freeport and logistic site which are both oriented to the south;
- To guarantee access in case of an emergency by two major road connections with the M1 wherein the existing connection will have a complementary function;
- To relieve *Plaine Magnien* village from noise, emissions and danger (level road crossing of village traffic and highway traffic) caused by the existing access road;
- To create a representative entrance road to the airport which is not possible along the existing access road where typical village houses are built right up to the border of the road;
- To exploit the present situation south of the airport where no major buildings or other constructions are yet blocking the possible route to the M1.

The location and alignment of the proposed New Airport Access Road ('the Project') is illustrated in Figure 2-1.

In January 2014, AML appointed LUXCONSULT (Mtius) Ltd. to provide the detailed engineering design for the Project and to prepare an EIA report for approval by the MoE in line with the applicable legislation.

## **1.2. EIA REQUIREMENTS**

The proposed project falls under Part B of the First Schedule (Section 15(2)) of the Environmental Protection Act 2002 (List of undertakings requiring an EIA; No. 21: 'highway and mass transit systems') for which an EIA licence is required (see section 3.1 of this report).

However, given that the proposed project is in the National Interest, the project has been declared an EXEMPT undertaking. The corresponding letter from the Ministry of Environment is provided as ANNEX A to this report.

## **1.3. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology adopted for the conduct of the EIA and the preparation of the EIA statement follow the applicable guidelines as provided in Section 18(2) of the EPA. For the purpose of the study the EIA team reviewed the available planning documents for the project and environment-related

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<sup>6</sup> See section 4.6 of this report for more details

information contained in the EIA reports for earlier developments (e.g. for the International Airport and the Holiday Inn Hotel); carried out site visits; and met with AML staff .

Given the nature and location of the Project other stakeholder consultations were not considered necessary.

The boundaries of the study area were defined such as to ensure that the Project's potential direct and indirect environmental impacts can be addressed and sensitive receptors that may be directly or indirectly affected during construction and / or operation are included. Considering the Project location, the local topographical conditions and surrounding land use the Project area is considered not to be specifically sensitive to the typical environmental effects of road projects. Therefore the corridor for this EIA was defined as 250 m to either side from the proposed centerline. This corridor includes existing settlements such as *Plaine Magnien* and *Mare d'Albert* as well as planned or ongoing developments, the edges of which are considered to be the most sensitive potential receptors of impacts caused by the Project.