

## **Study finds no significant spaceport impact Draft EIS calls for handling El Camino Real with care**

BY TODD G. DICKSON  
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A draft Environmental Impact Statement found no significant ecological or historical barriers to Spaceport America, which is key to the \$198 million commercial space-flight complex getting its federal spaceport license and full funding.

Located in the Jornada del Muerto Desert land 45 miles north of Las Cruces, Spaceport America's EIS must now survive a public review process, and the New Mexico Spaceport Authority must provide assurances that it will comply with mitigation suggestions made in the report by the California firm Tetra Tech.

Once these next steps are taken and a record of decision is issued in the final EIS, the Federal Aviation Administration is poised to issue the spaceport license, which will immediately initiate construction on the main support facilities and Virgin Galactic's runway and main terminal-hangar.

The public hearings are scheduled at 2 and 6:30 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

- Tuesday, Aug. 5, at Alamogordo City Hall
- Wednesday, Aug. 6, at Truth or Consequences Civic Center
- Thursday, Aug. 7, at the Doña Ana County Government Center, 845 N. Motel Blvd. in Las Cruces

The EIS found that Spaceport America's land uses were compatible with current uses, primarily rangeland for cattle grazing. It found that noise from the spaceport was "not expected to be significant." Visual impacts and light emissions from the spaceport on the late Lewis Cain ranch "would be less than significant," the EIS stated.

Pollution from operations and flights would have a "negligible" impact on air quality, the report stated, and that the spaceport would not significantly impact water quality or quantity. "Impacts from construction and operation on regional plant and wildlife species would not be significant," the EIS stated.

The EIS also didn't foresee difficulties with handling of hazardous materials and other wastes.

The most significant – and expected – finding was in relation to the Camino Real, a remnant trade road from the Spanish colonial period. The EIS calls for the FAA to work with the New Mexico State Historical Preservation Office before Spaceport America's construction to formalize an agreement with the Spaceport Authority on measures to "avoid, minimize or mitigate the adverse effects to historical properties."

That is the only area where the EIS finds formal mitigation measures must be taken to reduce those concerns to a level that is not significant. The EIS details a number of steps to be formalized in an agreement that it believes should satisfy the concerns, such as making the complex blend in with the surroundings, training spaceport workers to leave trail-related artifacts alone, busing in visitors and tourists and supporting efforts to study and preserve the trail.