



CHAPTER 7

SPACEPORT LICENSING PROCESS

The City of Paso Robles has undertaken the initiative to pursue a spaceport license for Paso Robles Municipal Airport (PRB) and is in the process of filing an application with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Office of Commercial Space Transportation to become licensed and approved. The purpose of this chapter is to document the coordination and development efforts undergone by the City of Paso Robles in its spaceport initiative.

The effort to transform PRB into an FAA-licensed commercial spaceport has unfolded over several years through a structured, multi-phase process aligned with federal requirements. Around 2021 to 2022, the City of Paso Robles first identified a spaceport as a way to diversify its economy and formally approved pursuit of the concept. During this early stage, officials defined the project's scope, focusing on horizontal takeoff and landing space operations rather than vertical rocket launches, and submitted initial pre-application materials to the FAA to begin engagement under its commercial space transportation framework.

Following this decision, the city moved into a development phase that ran parallel with early regulatory work. The city began building out a broader Spaceport and Technology Corridor, including propulsion testing capabilities (Rocket and Jet Engine Test Site 2 [R-Jets], identified on **Exhibit 5B**), partnerships with aerospace companies, and collaboration with educational institutions like California Polytechnic State University, Cuesta College, and local K-12 schools. These efforts were important for economic development, as well as for demonstrating the operational viability and demand the FAA expects from prospective spaceports.

At the same time, the city undertook the technical groundwork required for licensing under FAA commercial space transportation regulations (Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 420), including safety analyses, airspace integration planning, and environmental considerations. A key requirement was an update to the airport's master plan to ensure compatibility between traditional aviation operations and future spaceflight activities. As part of the master plan, the airport layout plan (ALP) set has been updated to reflect spaceport facilities and functions, including safety/setback critical areas associated with rocket and jet engine testing sites and a fuel loading pad.



To strengthen its application, the city contracted with RS&H to review its progress. The firm concluded that the city had established a strong foundation and identified remaining gaps that needed to be addressed before submission. Building on this effort, the city council formally advanced the project in March 2026 by authorizing the issuance of a request for proposals to hire specialized consultants to complete the FAA license application, which marked a transition from preparatory work to actively assembling the full application package.

The next phase involves finalizing and submitting the comprehensive application to the FAA, including detailed safety cases, environmental documentation, and operational plans required under federal regulations. The city is targeting completion of this submission within the next few years, with projections aiming around 2028. Once the application is submitted, the FAA will conduct an extensive review process to evaluate public safety risks, airspace impacts, and operational readiness before deciding whether to grant a commercial spaceport license. Until that approval is issued, PRB remains in the advanced stages of preparation rather than being an officially licensed spaceport.