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Oct. 29--The Walla Walla Regional Airport is embarking on a yearlong master plan development process expected to build a new guiding document for the operation.

Consulting firm Mead & Hunt is collecting information on the airport, according to an update Tuesday during the Port of Walla Walla meeting.

The plan is expected to help draw Federal Aviation Administration support on future projects, thus streamlining improvements. The FAA provides a huge share of funds for Airport Improvement Projects.

At least two meetings with the general public and meetings with an advisory board, including representatives from the city and county, tourism and tenants, are expected in the process, said Project Manager Mitch Hooper.

The cost to the Port was not immediately available this morning.

Such studies are typically done every 10 years, Hooper said Tuesday. The airport hasn't had one since 2002. Since then Walla Walla has seen an influx of tourism growth as well as increasing air travel.

Specific focus will be on airfield configuration and commercial and general aviation support. The study will not address the Airport District business park or Port of Walla Walla-owned properties outside of the airport, Hooper emphasized.

The information collected will help determine what's already available, what's expected in service needs, whether the airport is equipped to meet anticipated demand, what would need to be changed, how it's paid for and what the changes would look like.

Over the last month, Mead & Hunt's Portland office has gathered wind pattern information, aerial imagery, airport inventory and an air-service report, and arranged specialist site visits from environmental, architectural and historic preservation perspectives.

An advisory committee meeting will take place next Thursday at the Walla Walla Regional Airport at 10 a.m.

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