



Study Says Spokane Tribal Casino Would Have Little Impact

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AIRWAY HEIGHTS, Wash. -

The Spokane Tribe called it a good day after the Bureau of Indian Affairs released a draft environmental impact study Friday that says a new proposed casino in Airway Heights will have little impact on Fairchild Air Force Base.

"We're all very excited; it's a major step for us," Spokane Tribal Chairman Gregory Abrahamson said at a press conference Friday, where he announced that plans for a \$400 Million casino and retail complex on the West Plains are moving forward.

The draft environmental impact statement on the project released by BIA Friday found the proposed project would have a beneficial impact on the local economy would not increase gambling rates locally but it would increase traffic along Highway 2, although the problem could be mitigated.

"I'm pleased to announce step will have no significant impact on the existing and foreseeable operations at Fairchild," Abrahamson said.

Airway Heights businessman Irv Zakheim continues to oppose the new casino.

"They word everything, flower over everything, not an impact, not a problem is my view is a lie and misrepresentation to what could happen to Fairchild," Zakheim said.

Zakheim and some local politicians, including Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, have concerns the new casino would crowd the base and could be a reason for the government to close it in the future.

"We should do everything we can to look at this area and don't do any development in this entire region," Zakheim said.

The tribe says it won't impact the base and it will try to work with people who oppose the casino.

"With them, we take their concerns and if they are something we can mitigate or deal with, we will. If not, we're sorry, you can't please everyone," Abrahamson said.

The public now has 45 days to comment; the tribe hopes to know if it can

be built by the end of the year.

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