



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Williams County Approves Weather Radar Project

Williston, N.D., (March 22, 2019) – This week, the Williams County Board of County Commissioners and the 1% Public Safety Committee approved a project proposed by Williams County Emergency Management Director Mike Smith to bring year-round weather radar to the northwestern North Dakota region. In cooperation with the City of Williston, the radar system will be positioned at the new Williston Basin International Airport, a location that will enable radar coverage beyond the boundaries of Williams County. Revenue from the Williams County 1% Public Safety Sales Tax, a voter-approved tax implemented in April 2015 for a 10-year period, will pay for the project.

Known all too well by Williams County residents, the region is prone to severe weather events such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail storms, and blizzards. Lesser known might be that these weather events typically occur at atmospheric levels that are unable to be detected by the NEXRAD radar system. During the County Commission meeting on November 20, 2018, radar coverage was discussed with a representative from the North Dakota Atmospheric Resource Board (ARB). As the conversation transitioned from using radar for cloud modification projects to hazards of severe weather, the Commission expressed interest in exploring the possibility of placing a radar in Williams County.

By bringing a local-scale weather radar to the region, more information about the intensity, size, and structure of storms in our area will be available to the public and the National Weather Service (NWS). The Williams County Emergency Management and Communications Departments have been working with the NWS in Bismarck to understand how data from the radar can be transmitted to their office. Additional radar data about our area will help to enhance the decision-making abilities for storm warnings and forecasting operations in the NWS-Bismarck office. Emergency Management is also looking forward to incorporating the radar system into their existing weather warning initiatives, such as the Outdoor Warning Sirens and ALERT Williams County notification app. The public will be able to view radar maps online.

Radar located in Williams County will complement regional coverage currently provided by the year-round radar located in Bowman, ND, and the radar located in Stanley, ND, which operates in the summer months, as well as NEXRAD radar in Minot and Bismarck, helping to make a more robust radar network.

The next steps for Williams County are to obtain the necessary approvals from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for operating the system, selecting a radar system, and completing a construction plan with the Williston Basin International Airport team.

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