



VOR Decommissioning



“In 2012, the FAA released a proposed rule for a gradual reduction in the number of VORs in the National Airspace System. Citing the increased costs of maintaining a network of 967 VORs, the agency proposed cutting the number to about 500 VORs located at what the FAA calls the Core 30 airports around the country. Core 30 being the larger airports served primarily by Air Carriers. This level is called the Minimum Operational Network (MON).

The MON will provide:

- A backup capability for lower end GA IFR aircraft in the event of a widespread GPS outage
- An operational contingency, and not the robust network of current VORs
- A transitional network of VORs to allow users time to equip with new avionics to transition to RNAV and RNP

Once the VOR system has reached the minimum operational network (MON), the planned VOR coverage would also enable airplanes in the conterminous United States to *proceed safely to a destination with a GPS-independent approach within 100 nm*. MON coverage would only be guaranteed above 5,000 feet AGL.

When a VOR is decommissioned, it is replaced with a GPS based intersection and GPS based airways. For most of us, the effect will be minimal. Only the rare GA aircraft that is still navigating solely by VORs will see an impact—and that is still years away.

The original plan called for decommissioning 470 odd VORs starting in 2014 and completing the project by 2020. As with most things in the FAA, the project has slipped. The agency is now targeting (a reduction of) 308 VORs by 2025. As of April 2019, the FAA had decommissioned 23 VORs.”

