

Activities soaring at the Council Bluffs Municipal Airport

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Activities are really soaring at the Council Bluffs Municipal Airport.

Take the growth of aircraft fuel sales, for example.

“Advanced Air, the airport’s flight services provider, has quadrupled its fuel sales in the last 15 years,” said Andy Biller, executive director of the Council Bluffs Airport Authority. Biller’s excitement is sky-high on how the airport has grown over the years and what that means for its own future potential and the area it serves.

The extension of its runways and the installation of navigational aids for landing have been important for general aviation aircraft, he said.

“With the exception of Omaha’s Eppley Airfield, we’re the most capable airport in the metro area,” Biller said. “The expansion has made us a better general aviation alternative to the larger commercial airports.”

Besides the growth in fuel sales, there has been an increase of aircraft owners leasing hanger spaces. What’s more, some have even built their own hangers, Biller said.

“That’s a very important development and we’re just starting,” he said. “One of the niches that we can serve is having room to grow when it comes to building structures.”

An airport can be an important tool when it comes to economic development for that particular area, according to Biller, and the Council Bluffs airport is doing its part here. Its Board of Directors has members skilled in economic development with three of them actively involved with the Council Bluffs, as well as the Omaha Chamber of Commerce and all the clout they have in seeking businesses to the metro area.

Iowa Western Community College has a facility on the grounds for teaching aircraft mechanics.

“Aircraft mechanics are in short supply and we think the Iowa Western facility is an important component to business recruitment,” Biller said.

On the construction/renovation side, the airport is currently renovating its original 28 hangers and recently added 66 spaces to its parking lot, more than doubling its original capacity, Biller said.



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Cory Kleindienst, right, and Bob Pentzien fuel a Cessna Conquest II aircraft at the Council Bluffs Municipal Airport on Thursday, Sept. 22, 2016.

Earlier this year, the airport also received a \$1.7 million loan from the city to refinance bonds at a lower interest rate, which will eventually save the airport about \$289,000 in interest charges over eight years, while the city will receive interest payments totaling nearly \$144,000.

“That created savings that we’re reinvesting in our operations,” Biller said.

Two years ago, the airport created a 10-year, three-step financial plan. The first step was to build up its cash reserves. The second step, now underway, is the reinvestment in its essential facilities. These steps should then allow the airport to be better able to complete the third step, the investment in its growth potential.

“We have a lot on our plate,” Biller said.