

Ankeny airport eyes more hangars, longer runway



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6:02 p.m. CST February 19, 2016



(Photo: Special to the Register)

Growing demand from corporate jet-setters, flying enthusiasts and even a few presidential candidates has the Ankeny Regional Airport looking to expand its facilities.

Additional hangars, to allow more private planes, and a runway extension are needed to accommodate larger airplanes, according to airport officials.

The Ankeny airport, the third busiest airport in the state, served about 40,000 corporate and private passengers last year. The 550-acre site, at 3700 S.E. Convenience Blvd. on the city's south side, has two runways that accommodate passenger and freight users. It opened in 1994.

Officials say demand for plane storage has grown in recent years, resulting in a 30-person waiting list. Last year, the Polk County Aviation Authority, which operates the airport, built a \$370,000, six-unit tee hangar and approved land for the construction of two additional private hangars. Those hangars will be built this year to hold midsize aircraft for corporate and general aviation use.

"It's easy to get in and out of (the Ankeny Regional Airport) and it's geographically located where it's attractive for people to access the Des Moines metro," said Derek Lord, Ankeny's economic development director.

The airport's five-year plan includes \$3.4 million in infrastructure improvements that could pave the way for 18 new box hangars. Ankeny has 84 tee hangars, which typically hold one plane, and four box hangars, which can house multiple aircraft, depending on their size.

"We're in (the) point of its evolution where we need to reinvest to accommodate additional aircrafts," Lord said.



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Additional plans include extending the airport's main runway by 500 feet, to 6,000 feet, to accommodate larger planes, pavement work, building a wildlife fence around the facility to keep deer and other animals out and acquiring more land.

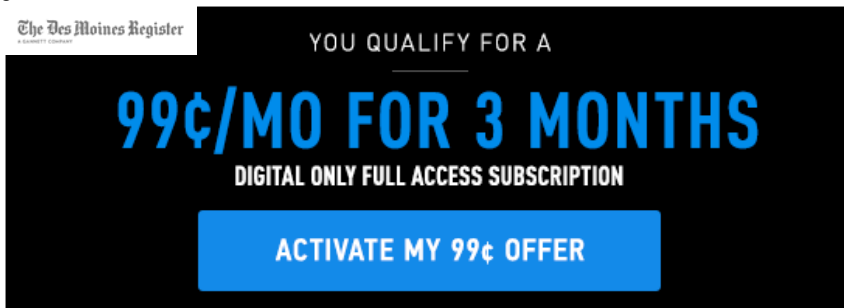
"We have to do quite a bit of financing and construction just to get it set up so those box hangars can be built," said Ankeny Assistant City Manager Paul Moritz, who oversees the airport. "The schedule's dependent on whether we may or may not get federal or state funding for those improvements. Those are fluid."

Marty Hall, treasurer of the Des Moines Flying Club, said there's a lack of space for airplanes at many central Iowa airports, including Des Moines, Winterset and Pella.

"It creates a problem for owners because it's not like you can put it in your garage," Hall said. "If you can't find space for it, you have to go out a long distance to find hangar space available."

Hall said the club uses the Ankeny airport as a training space for members. He said there are corporations and Iowa residents interested in renting hangar space there.

"It should be an appeal for every city to have an airport," Hall said. "Corporations typically have aircrafts, and they don't like to fly public transportation, so that's always nice if you can bring a business in."



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