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Bids Sought for Electronic Cedar Rapids Airport Layout Plan

By George Ford, Reporter



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CEDAR RAPIDS - As the Federal Aviation Administration moves toward using satellite technology to modernize the nation's air traffic control system, The Eastern Iowa Airport is getting on board.

The Cedar Rapids Airport Commission on Monday will select an engineering firm to develop an electronic airport layout plan. The contract also will require the firm to collect and input airport data into the FAA's Airports Geographic Information System.

The goal of the FAA's NextGen project is a satellite-based air traffic control system that could cut flight delays as much as 40 percent. It also would reduce fuel use and aircraft noise, and save all parties millions of dollars.

Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids is part of an ITT Corp. team recently awarded a NextGen contract by the FAA. The team will conduct development work across all dimensions of air traffic control, including ground systems, avionics, aircraft, air traffic control rules and procedures, human factors, safety and security, environmental and standards.

NextGen would replace existing equipment that requires aircraft to move point-to-point across the sky to match up with radar beacons on the ground. When pilots approach airports, they often take wide turns to match up with the beacons so controllers can guide them into airports, burning extra fuel and time.

By using global positioning receivers in the airplanes and new control systems, NextGen creates "precision" approaches and departures to and from airports that cut the distance that airplanes have to cover.


American Airlines has been using the precision routes from Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, with reported annual fuel savings of about \$10 million a year. Delta claims it is saving about \$36 million a year at its Atlanta hub using the new approaches.

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