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Davenport airport project ready for takeoff



Kevin E. Schmidt, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Crews from McCarthy Improvement Co. of Davenport clear old concrete from a runway at the Davenport Municipal Airport. The work is part of the \$6.5 million rehabilitation of the runway.

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Davenport Municipal Airport's 66-year-old runway is getting a facelift in a matter of months, but the work involves shutting the facility down for 30 days.

The concrete for runway 3/21, which runs from southwest to northeast, is being removed and replaced in a \$6.5 million project scheduled for completion by Sept. 26. The runway was built in 1948 and maintained over the years through panel patching.

The runway replacement and a proposed extension of the second runway are hoped to boost economic development around the airport with the nearby Eastern Iowa Industrial Center and soon-to-be-built railroad transload facility.

Workers from McCarthy Improvement of Davenport began

Davenport Municipal Airport

Runway replacement project costs \$6.5 million, with the Federal Aviation Administration paying \$5.5 million.

The airport and runway were built in 1948 to replace Cram Field, which was located near Division Street at Duck Creek.

Runway 3/21 is 100 feet wide by 4,001 feet long.

Runway 15/33 is 100 feet wide by 5,511 feet long.

The airport has about 300 corporate aircraft arrivals per year.

breaking up and removing concrete three weeks ago. Once that is completed, poor soil will be removed and the site graded. Then concrete will be poured in the three-phase project.

It has 28,000 general aviation take-offs and landings per year.

The key work is replacing the concrete where the two runways intersect, prompting the airport's shutdown starting June 2. The work at the intersection is scheduled to be completed ahead of the Quad-City Air Show the weekend of Aug. 9-10.

The closure does not affect Iowa National Guard operations at the airport.

On a recent visit, 1,500 feet of runway was gone and grading had begun to provide better drainage. A retention pond also has been built on the south side of the airport to help with stormwater runoff.

"They are working at a phenomenal rate," airport manager Tom Vesalga said. "We are finding more work for them because they are getting it done and moving on."

As concrete is removed, trucks arrive about every two minutes. He expects it to be the same when concrete is being poured.

"It is going to be a near-constant stream of trucks," the airport manager said.

The second phase is the intersection work that required Vesalga to notify 75 aircraft owners they would need to relocate for the month or stay put.

"Many have scheduled maintenance for that time," he said.

The second phase, which involves removing and replacing the intersecting concrete, doesn't bother air show director Ken Hopper, who said he has worked closely with Vesalga on the timing.

"That is the reason we moved our show back to August," Hopper said. "The city has been very good to us."

Alderman Gene Meeker, at large, who was the city council's liaison to the Airport Commission before it was disbanded, said the flurry of activity is exciting and important.

"That airport is a gem, and people don't understand how important it is to our local community and economy," he said. "With all the development out there, it is going to be a positive for our marketing and promotion."

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