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Iowa City Airport Expands with New Construction Projects

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IOWA CITY, Iowa -- One of the oldest airports west of the Mississippi is taking on some major, modern upgrades.

Work is underway on a number of projects at the Iowa City Municipal Airport. Airport leaders said there isn't enough space, and that has been a problem. So, they're adding spots to bring in more money. Construction has already started on three new hangars, and that work should wrap up by the end of October. The airport expects the new space to lead to increased traffic and usage at the airport.

Right now 85 aircraft call this airport home, but soon that number will grow. Pilots are already getting word of the growth.

"It signals that the economy in Iowa City is still strong, there are still folks utilizing the airport for business, for pleasure, these hangars are meant to increase the capacity, more of the corporate aircraft side of things," Tharp said. "So, the folks that have businesses that are operating in and out of Iowa City will be able to have a place to store their plane."

There was a similar push to increase traffic and build more hangars in the late 90s.

"Looks like we are in that type of a growth season right now where we can have a few more hangar units that come along in the next few years, so we're pretty excited about that," Tharp said.

The new hangars are only one portion of renovation projects going on right now at the airport. Crews are also currently pouring the concrete on the new 5,000 foot long taxiway. The taxiway is the path pilots use to get their airplanes back and forth to the runway or terminal. The price tag on the project is \$3 million, most of which is funded with Federal Aviation Administration dollars.

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"What happens is it increases the safety factor," Tharp said. "Now, you don't have aircraft that have landed or are taking off that have to get to the far end of the runway and have to use the runway as a taxiway."

Work on the taxiway will wrap up in the spring of 2013.

In all, Tharp expects the new projects to add about one thousand extra airplanes taking off and landing at the municipal airport each year. According to airport documents, the operations already generate more than \$11 million of activity for the local economy per year. Officials estimate the projects will increase the inflow of money to the airport and to local businesses and attractions.

The Iowa City municipal Airport is a general aviation airport that handles medical, private and business flights. It sits two miles southwest of Downtown Iowa City.

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