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**George C. Ford**

George Ford has spent decades covering business news across Eastern Iowa. Ford is a native of Lexington, Ky., but has [...]

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Updated: 24 September 2012 | 2:09 pm in B380

## Numbers trending positive at Eastern Iowa Airport

Airport has topped \$15 million in annual operating revenue

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More passengers are flying out of the [Eastern Iowa Airport](#) and that's reflected in the revenue figures for the last fiscal year that ended on June 30.

The Cedar Rapids Airport Commission on Monday heard that 40,239 people boarded planes last month, up 15.3 percent from 34,885 in August 2011. During the first eight months of 2012, 327,112 people boarded flights at the airport, up 13.2 percent from 289,012 outbound travelers in the same period of 2011.

Don Swanson, director of finance and administration, said operating revenue for the fiscal year that ended June 30 was \$15.1 million, up 6.1 percent from \$14.3 million in fiscal 2011. Swanson attributed the higher revenue to increases in parking revenue, passenger facilities charge revenue, concession revenue from car rentals and the restaurant due to a 5.7 percent increase in passengers, and higher farmland rental and landing fees.

Swanson noted that it was the first time the airport has topped \$15 million in annual operating revenue.

Operating expenses were \$6.9 million in fiscal 2012, down 5.7 percent from \$7.3 million in fiscal 2011, due to a reduction in capital equipment expenditures. Net operating income was \$8.3 million, up 18.4 percent or \$1.3 million from \$7 million in fiscal 2011.

The reduction in capital expenditures in fiscal 2012 is due to the purchase of a new \$650,000 airport fire truck in fiscal 2011.

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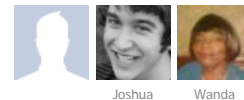


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(Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

Swanson told the commission that the numbers for July and August, the first two months of fiscal 2013, also show a positive trend.

Operating revenue for fiscal 2013 year to date is \$1.65 million, up 5.1 percent from \$1.73 million in the first two months of fiscal 2012 FYTD 2012. Swanson attributed the higher revenue to an increase in parking revenue and concession revenue from car rentals and the restaurant, which reflects the 14.4 percent growth in passengers.

Operating expenses for the first two months of fiscal 2013 are just more than \$1 million, up 19 percent from \$846,000 in the same period of fiscal 2012 due to seasonal variations in marketing, utilities and fuel expenditures.

The city-owned airport, which does not receive property tax revenue, derives its income from user fees, federal and state grants, state vertical infrastructure grants, concession revenue and farm income.

Airport Director Tim Bradshaw said the positive trends are a reflection of the regional economy.

"The airport is the pulse of the local economy, and if the airport is doing well it's a sign that the local economy also is doing well," Bradshaw said. "We're telling all of our airport route planners that the economy is doing well here. Businesses are expanding, we're seeing a lot of construction, and they need to add additional flights."

Bradshaw noted that Frontier Airlines has increased the number of weekly flights as planes are flying with passenger loads in excess of 89 percent. He said the addition of the Frontier flights to Denver and other western U.S. destinations has not reduced traffic for United Airlines, which has lowered its fares to match Frontier.

The commission on Monday took the first step toward remodeling the passenger terminal lobby, which has remained largely unchanged for 25 years. [Foth Infrastructure and Environment](#) of Cedar Rapids was awarded a contract for preliminary design services, not to exceed \$186,895.

Bradshaw said passengers arriving in the upper concourse of the terminal see a different view than the lower area of the terminal.

"The upper terminal is very modern with seats offering plug-ins for travelers using laptop computers, WiFi and other amenities," he said. "That remodeling was completed in 2009.

"Once you come down the escalator, you go through a time warp.

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"We've rebuilt the primary runway and half of the secondary runway as well as some taxiways. It's time for improvements in the terminal, which are more visible to passengers using the airport."

Bradshaw said [Mead & Hunt Inc.](#), a Madison, Wis., consulting firm working with the airport to develop a new 20-year master plan, may share some preliminary concepts for the terminal remodeling at a Nov. 15 public meeting. He said construction likely will begin in the summer of 2013, with completion expected in 2014.



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