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Reconstruction Will Leave Airport with Single Runway for 60 Days

By George Ford, Reporter



A United Airlines 737 jet airliner taking off from a runway at the Eastern Iowa Airport.

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CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — The secondary runway at The Eastern Iowa Airport will be shut down for 60 days beginning July 4, leaving the regional airport with a single runway available to general and commercial aircraft.

Airport Operations Director Sara Mau said the 6,199-foot runway will be shut down to accommodate reconstruction.

The Cedar Rapids Airport Commission in March awarded Metro Pavers of Iowa City a \$6.3 million contract for the work. The project includes reconstruction of Taxiway C, which is adjacent to the runway.

The taxiway work, involving some of the oldest pavement at the airport, will be completed before the runway is shut down to provide access to the main runway for airplanes stored in nearby hangars.

Reconstruction of the southern section of the runway will involve removal of 1,700 feet of existing pavement and replacement with new concrete. The northern portion of the same runway is scheduled for a similar project in fiscal year 2014, along with construction of a new taxiway.

The runway and taxiway projects are eligible for federal Airport Improvement Program entitlement funding. While owned by the City of Cedar Rapids, The Eastern Iowa Airport is a self-sustaining entity that does not receive any city or county property tax revenue.

The airport will cover its share of the projects with passenger facility charge revenue. Passenger facility charges are included with air fares paid by travelers using the airport.

Mau said Taxiway A, which was converted to an auxiliary runway during the reconstruction of the airport's 8,600-foot main runway in the summer of 2010, cannot be used as a backup runway. She

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said conversion of the 7,700-foot taxiway would require lengthy FAA review as well as application and removal of about \$5,000 worth of runway marker paint.

As the runway and taxiway reconstruction projects are beginning, a \$7.2 million passenger terminal remodeling and expansion project is rapidly moving toward completion, according to Airport Director Tim Bradshaw.


A new \$4.4 million baggage-handling system will remove the federal Transportation Security Administration's baggage screening process from the terminal lobby in August, where it was installed after 9/11. Airline personnel will place baggage on a moving conveyor belt that will carry it to screening machines in a secure area of the terminal.

The TSA is picking up the \$2.9 million tab for the security-related portion of the bag inspection system, and the Cedar Rapids Airport Commission is covering the remaining \$1.5 million. A 10,000-square-foot addition to the terminal houses a central baggage makeup area with a carousel similar to those used by passengers to retrieve their luggage at their destination.

Mau said all of the airlines serving the airport have moved into new ticket counters in the west end of the terminal. When the project is completed this fall, passengers will experience a return to air travel as it was before the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"They will see the old days of aviation when they would take their bag to the ticket counter and leave it there, rather than having to take it to another area for inspection," Mau said.

Bradshaw and Mau said removing the baggage inspection machines will create additional space and lower the noise level in the terminal. Bradshaw said a long-range plan under development to guide the airport over the next 25 years will likely include recommendations for additional uses of terminal space.

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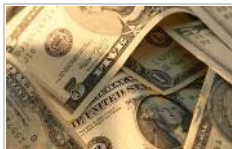
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