

Airport to begin taxiway revitalization

*Project to begin during the
summer and estimated to
be complete before winter*

BY EMILY ROTH

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MT. VERNON — Due to new guidelines from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport will soon begin a revitalization project for Taxiway B2.

"The FAA now has changed guidance for what in their minds is safe and what is unsafe," Airport Director Chris Collins explained to the airport Board of Commissioners on Tuesday. "They no longer like taxiways that lead right to a runway, and we have a good one right here. [Our two taxiways] are what are called air carrier taxiways. They are extra wide and extra heavy to accommodate big airplanes that weigh a lot."

"Their new guidance says that they don't like some pilots that taxi right on out ... and then there's a runway accident, so we have to take these out. They won't do anything with them until they deteriorate enough to where they need to be taken out."

Collins said he has called two different companies to hire for the contract work of rejuvenating the taxiway and recommended the use of Gee Asphalt Systems of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Gee Asphalt is approved by IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation)-FAA.

Collins continued to state, "The bottom line is that when this taxiway gets to where it's starting to rattle and crack, at that point [the FAA] will say 'Okay, Mt. Vernon, you can't have that anymore. We're tearing all

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that out, and we'll put another one in, maybe a little one right here so the pilot has to turn and then make another turn and make another turn and go out.' So if we want to preserve this, if we want it to last, we need to preserve it right now because it's only about three years old. That's when it was revitalized the last time."

The project would cost \$7,900 from the airport's Capital Projects Fund.

"The bad news is," said Collins, "we can't get federal or state funding for it. They won't pay for it because the FAA will not approve us doing this because to them it doesn't meet their new guidance. I can't stress enough how important a pavement this is to us. We use this during airlifts ... It has an extra radius for bigger airplanes to make their turns and everything."



Sentinel Photo/EMILY ROTH

TAXIWAY RESTORATION — During Tuesday night's meeting of the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners, Airport Director Chris Collins points to the taxiway to be revitalized. The project will be funded by the airport's Capital Projects Fund.

The project is projected to begin work in the summer, with Collins estimating that the revitalization would be complete before winter.

"I just didn't want to go into another winter without having the project [done]," Collins stated.

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6-10-15