

Municipal airports plan major updates for 2018

Centralia, Mt. Vernon airport construction to help locals soar

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CENTRALIA — Local airports are revving up services to their communities next year by constructing various new additions to their facilities.

The Centralia Municipal Airport plans to add a taxiway and expand the easement surrounding the runways.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport will add a new airport sign and new T-hangar allowing for storage of five more aircraft, for a total storage capacity of 55 aircraft.

The Centralia Municipal Airport will conduct a study to determine possible land and easement acquisition for runway 18.

Centralia Economic Development Director Kala Lambert said of the easements at the airport, "We have to control a certain level [of air space] to make sure there are no obstructions that are erected in the area that we keep clear."

The Centralia Municipal Airport will also add a new taxiway to the west side of runway nine.

The two runways at the airport cross each other in the middle. Planes using runway nine currently have to backtrack to the center of the runway in order to taxi to the hangars.

The new taxiway will allow planes to enter and exit on the west side of the runway, increasing safety by allowing planes to exit the runway more quickly — "to not keep aircraft on the runway any longer than they need to be," explained Lambert.

Please see **Airports**, Page 5A

Airports:

Continued from Page 4A

Lambert said the easement and acquisition study is expected to cost around \$165,000, while the entire cost of the study, mapping, acquisition, materials, and construction is estimated to be around \$510,000.

Lambert stressed that the City of Centralia will only be responsible for about \$34,000 of the total cost.

The remaining balance will be funded by the Transportation Improvement Program for Airports and an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) Block Grant.

"We get \$148,500 from the block grant, and the federal side is kicking in another \$310,500 from discretionary funds," said Lambert.

Lambert said that the FAA determines which municipal airports to give discretionary funding based on several factors.

"They look at all the qualifying airports in Illinois, and they determine projects that would receive a higher priority," explained Lambert. "Some airports our size do not receive as many flights as we do. It's a very active airport. That's one of the criteria that they look at. ... They also look at safety."

According to Lambert, Airgo International Flight School in Centralia is a large factor in the activity of the Centralia airport.

No representative from

Airgo was available to comment on the effects the construction will have on the school.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Manager Chris Collins said the airport will be adding a new sign and another T-hangar to the property.

"It allows us to have more based airplanes at the airport," said Collins about the hangar project. The airport currently has 32 hangars, allowing for storage of 50 aircraft. The new hangar will provide space for an additional five or more aircraft.

Collins also noted that the addition of the T-hangar will provide a designated area for the airport's de-icing equipment which is currently being stored in one of the box hangars.

According to Collins, the total cost for the new hangar is approximately \$675,000. The Transportation Improvement Program will support the project with \$356,250, leaving \$318,750 as the local expense.

Collins said the airport wanted to expand its available hangar space for residents to store their aircrafts because of local demand and to have space available for future demands.

"It's a little of both. When we put the project together we had a waiting list. We no longer have a waiting list, but that could change in a matter of months," commented Collins.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport has not updated their signage since approxi-

mately 1975.

Said Collins, "It is definitely time for an update."

The airport plans to install a new sign in 2018, in addition to the new hangar. Collins reported the cost of the new sign should be less than the budgeted \$25,000 in the Momentum 2020 Capital Development Plan for the new sign.

"We hope the sign project does not cost that much," said Collins. "The airport has a plan approved at the board level and plans to seek bids [for the new sign] in the next few weeks." 12-24-

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