

# Airport project delayed by federal funding

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport is facing a setback in its Federal Aviation Administration-mandated Runway Safety Area project.

Though the airport was first on the Illinois State Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics list for funding of the runway extension

construction, the funds were given to other airports instead, said airport manager Chris Collins.

"Eight other airports trumped us," he told the board of commissioners. "They all had congressional letters of support. We're at least six months behind now."

Collins said a \$2.4 million grant had been written to fund the Mt. Vernon airport's fence project and the De-

catu airport's fence project, and he had expected that the remainder of the funds from that grant would be applied to the RSA project.

"Apparently what has happened is ... the funds are going to be split up over eight other airports," he said. "What we were told was, the remainder was going to go to the RSA proj-



Collins

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ect, and it seems that is not going to happen in this fiscal year. It's only six months from the start of a new fiscal year federally, so it's going to delay us six months."

The runway safety area is the area prepared or suitable for reducing the risk of dam-

age to aircraft and passengers if they undershoot, overshoot or run off the runway.

The FAA recommendations changed several years ago from the 200-foot extensions at the ends of runways to a 500-foot wide by 1,000-foot long area beyond each runway end.

Collins said an environmental study of the airport grounds, necessary for the completion of the RSA project, was originally

to be funded locally, and then the airport would apply for reimbursement through the state, but the FAA is considering a \$125,000 grant to cover the environmental assessment.

"All is not lost, they're trying to help us," Collins said of the FAA. "The situation is not grim, it's just slipped just a little bit in the timing."

The environmental study began July 15.

Collins told the board of

commissioners he was counseled not to ask for a congressional letter of support for the RSA project, and had been confident that funding would be coming to the airport at any time.

"We were doing it the 'nice guy' way, but those eight other airports didn't go the 'nice guy' way," he said. "...I think we do need to now. Now I think it's time to get the letter on our side."