

Mt. Vernon Airport eyes progress on signage project

Ribbon cutting also planned for parking lot initiative

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MOUNT VERNON — Mount Vernon Outland Airport is moving forward on a major airfield signage project that could start construction as soon as this fall, said Airport Director Chris Collins.

The nearly \$1.4 million initiative is primarily being funded by the federal government, but there is a local match of \$71,758. The project involves replacing all the taxiway/runway guidance signs on the airfield. That includes both destination signs and distance remaining signs. The destination signs tell pilots where all the airport services are located, while distance remaining signs tell pilots how many feet of runway they have left before there is grass, Collins said.



Sentinel File Photo

MAJOR PROJECT — Mount Vernon Outland Airport is making progress on a major airfield signage project that could begin construction this fall. The nearly \$1.4 million project is mostly being funded by the federal government.

According to Collins, the signs are not only important for guidance but for safety as well. The signage helps prevent aircraft from running into each other on the ground. Also, it prevents one aircraft from taxiing across an active runway while another aircraft is arriving or departing.

"These provide guidance to the pilots taxiing aircraft either on or off of runways," Collins said, later adding, "Probably the primary importance — other than

distance remaining and guidance — is the prevention of runway incursions. They help to alleviate runway incursions."

On Tuesday, April 14, the Mount Vernon Airport Authority (MVAA) Board of Commissioners approved and signed the engineering agreement for the signage project. Previously, in January, the project was bid out through the state and federal bid letting process.

Two years ago, another federal project was done

at Mount Vernon Airport to replace all the airfield lighting. Originally, the signs were going to be done along with the lights, but the feds decided instead to separate the two projects because it would be too large and costly to do them both at once, Collins said.

Collins said he would like to see the signage project get started this fall, but construction might not begin until the spring of 2027.

PARKING LOT PROJECT

Also on April 14, the Airport Board heard an update on the recently completed parking lot rehabilitation and entry road project. To celebrate the project's completion, the airport will host a ribbon cutting with the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce at 11:30 a.m. on May 7, Collins said.

The \$977,348 project was mostly funded through the state's Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan, and the contractor was E.T. Simonds of Carbondale. It was a 90% state/10% local project, and the airport's share was \$97,734.

The project covered the

total rehabilitation of all vehicle parking lots, aircraft feeder roads, and Firebaugh Drive. Also, several sections of concrete curbing were replaced, and Aviation Drive was crack-filled and seal coated, Sentinel archives state.

Collins said the ribbon cutting will be a great way to not only celebrate the completion of this important project, but to thank state officials for their assistance through Rebuild Illinois. Several state officials are invited to attend as special guests.

"That project was so massive, we wouldn't have been able to do that locally without phasing it over several years," Collins said. "And it would cost more by phasing it like that. ... We just want to say thank you. This was a very special project to us."

OTHER AIRPORT BOARD ACTIONS ON APRIL 14 INCLUDED:

- Collins updated the board on the new snow removal equipment building project.

- Collins spoke about the airport's flight training program, and also updated

commissioners on the airport's new website, outlandflight.com. The site is an all-inclusive comprehensive website dedicated to flight training, and also includes an Outland Log Book that has information on pilots earning new certifications.

• MVAA

Administrative Assistant Sheila Jolly Scrivner spoke to the board about this summer's Air Race Classic June 26 to 29, and how the town is stepping up to help. All but two of the sponsorships for the event have been sold. A total of 46 teams are confirmed to participate, which means roughly 175 people attending.

- Collins spoke to the board about an ongoing project to update the airport's Illinois Aviation System Plan. That project is now in the data collection phase.

- Collins reported to the board that as of April 2, the airport had sold 197,500 gallons of aviation fuel, including jet fuel and aviation gasoline. Also, the airport's flight school planes logged a total of 119.3 total flight hours in March.