

# Cleared for takeoff: Ribbon cutting held at new airport terminal in Mason City

[globegazette.com/news/local/mason-city-airport-new-terminal-ribbon-cutting/article\\_b184f9a4-49f0-11ef-a037-df225414c9ef.html](https://www.globegazette.com/news/local/mason-city-airport-new-terminal-ribbon-cutting/article_b184f9a4-49f0-11ef-a037-df225414c9ef.html)

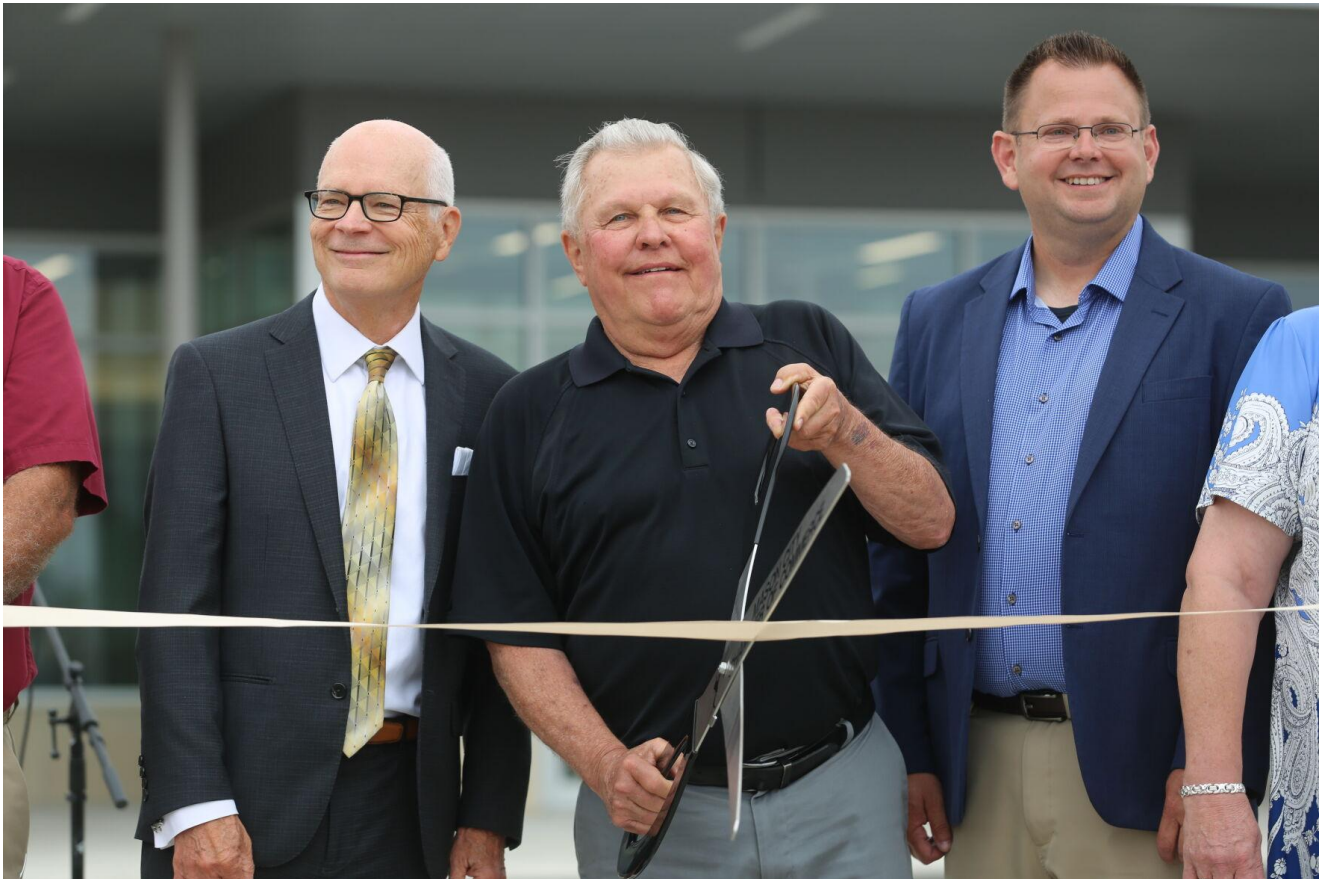
July 25, 2024

## Jacob Shafer

A ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday at Mason City Municipal Airport signaled the new terminal is ready for use.

Attendees gathered to hear about the project's amenities compared with the existing terminal and got a chance to check out the space firsthand.

Gary Wattnem, airport commission board chair, started the ceremony by thanking many people for their work on the project, which broke ground in September 2022. He said the new terminal is a major improvement for Mason City and the surrounding area.



Mason City Municipal Airport Commission Board Chair Gary Wattnem, center, takes the big scissors and cuts the ribbon at the Mason City airport's new terminal ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday.

Jacob Shafer

“This airport here on this 1,100 acres is an economic engine for Mason City and North Iowa,” Wattnem said. “This building is going to afford you amenities that you only see in the big cities. ... This brings a new level of service to us.”

The terminal has a long list of upgrades to improve the customer experience with a much larger gate hold area, device charger ports at nearly every seat, a service animal relief area, water bottle stations after security, a passenger boarding bridge onto the aircraft, and modern amenities throughout with much larger space for passengers before they board.

It also offers benefits for airport staff and TSA agents, like adequate space for screening equipment and modern office space.

“You’re going to recognize when you get inside that this is a very well-designed, efficient building that is going to enhance your traveling experience,” Wattnem said.

David Sims, airport manager, expressed his excitement about the new terminal and other improvement projects at the airport.

“If you had told me when I became airport manager less than five years ago that the next five years would bring the largest transformation that this airport has seen in decades, there’s no way I would have believed you,” Sims said.



The line of people making their way into the Mason City Municipal Airport's new terminal at Wednesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Jacob Shafer

The airport also has seen improvements in new taxiways, parking areas, and hangers.

“Today we’re capping off all those improvements with our crown jewel – this new airport terminal,” Sims said. “This new 23,000-square-foot facility is going to be a great addition to North Iowa, welcoming travelers from all over the world to and from our community, being the first place they see when they enter our community.”

Sims said the “milestone” project — while bringing an elevated passenger experience typically associated with large, big-city airports — still offers the convenience of flying locally.

Dori James of Mason City was at Wednesday’s ribbon cutting. As a frequent flier, James is excited to try out the new terminal as soon as possible. She has tickets for a flight next month.

“It looks just great in here, really great,” James said. “I’m ready to fly out of here and get to use all the new amenities.”

One improvement James looks forward to trying out is the new baggage claim, allowing passengers’ bags to come to them.

Mason City Mayor Bill Schickel spoke at Wednesday's event, saying the building is an asset for the community to enjoy. The first flight out of the new terminal is scheduled for July 31.



Mason City Mayor Bill Schickel, right, speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Mason City Municipal Airport's new terminal building.

Jacob Shafer

“The jet service we have out here — 250 people a week, as many as 6,000 a year — those are all opportunities for people to make new connections with North Iowa and our community,” Schickel said. “There’s a reason we’re seeing opportunity taking place in North Iowa, and the reason begins right here at this airport.”

Members of the community, local organizations such as the Mason City Chamber of Commerce, and crew members from the many companies that worked on the project were allowed access to roam the new terminal and see all the new upgrades firsthand.



The public was able to experience the airport's new terminal at Wednesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony—checking out the terminal's lobby, gate hold and other upgrades.

Jacob Shafer

Schickel's enthusiasm was shared by the large crowd attending the ceremony.

“Big-time airport amenities with hometown charm,” Schickel said. “And beautiful prairie-school design on budget and on time ... the gateway to the world where opportunity takes off at this airport every single day.”

Schickel touted the economic impact the new terminal will bring to the community.

“For every dollar, there is at least threefold return on that expenditure (from travelers to the city) and the economic impact on our community has been huge,” Schickel said. “Just imagine what it will be like after we open this new facility, and wait till you see the inside – a modern spacious lobby, spacious TSA screening area, and a boarding bridge. It's big time baby!”

**Jacob Shafer**

---