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## Iowa City Airport construction to take off Monday

BY STACEY MURRAY | MAY 02, 2013 5:00 AM

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The Iowa City Municipal Airport spring construction will take flight May 6 to complete previous projects while it works to earn grant money to further progress.

Airport manager Michael Tharp said improvements would create a more accessible airport for fliers.

“The updates will bring a bit more user-friendly airport,” he said.

A total of 36,000 takeoffs and landings go through the Iowa City Municipal Airport every year.

The airport is working on numerous projects. The first major one is the paving and lighting of the runway 7/25 parallel taxiway. Construction on this project began last fall and will commence for the second half of construction May 6. Tharp estimates this work will last through July.

The second project is a pavement overlay project for the taxiway. Last, the airport is doing fuel-system maintenance with cleaning and pipe replacement.

Amid construction projects, airport officials are looking to apply for state grants to fund their construction.

The Iowa Department of Transportation funds roughly 20 to 25 projects every year. The funds amount to roughly \$2 million to \$3 million. Tim McClung, the program and project manager for the Office of Aviation in the Iowa DOT, said the grants are typically split into two categories — one based on safety and the other on planning and development.

These funds are derived from aviation taxes and aircraft-registration fees. Last year, the state provided approximately \$3.2 million in funding.

“We’re trying to protect the infrastructure that is already out there and protect the investments,” McClung said.

Tharp said the state has been generous with the airport, and local officials hope to see this same generosity as they push construction forward.

Recently, the airport underwent \$750,000 of improvements and received \$250,000 in grant money from the state.

Tharp estimates the projects will cost roughly \$400,000 and are looking to receive \$330,000 in grants. The remainder of the project costs would be funded through local match by the city.

Iowa City budgets \$100,000 for the airport annually to the airport.

Iowa City Councilor Rick Dobyns said there is value in the city’s municipal airport because it serves both community businesses and the University of Iowa.

“It’s critical you have an airport close,” Dobyns said.

He said the UI is a part of the city’s commitment, not only in education, but in service as well. The UI Hospitals and Clinics need to be able to transport tissue transplants, among its other services. Dobyns also said the airport allows for business growth in Iowa City.

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"When businesses come to try to determine if they want to establish a commitment to the city of Iowa City, an important part of the checkmark is the already available municipal airport," he said.

While the airport is currently undergoing construction, Dobyms said an airport is a quality investment for a city.

"It pays to put money into an airport," he said.

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network. We need to stop funding these small airports for private flyers.

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