

Ready for take off

By Brenden West Assistant Editor | Posted: Friday, December 12, 2014 6:00 am

CLINTON — It took longer than expected, but now, almost a year from the day construction started on its airport, the city of Clinton can move forward with more complete aviation services.

Dozens on Thursday joined Clinton Municipal Airport Manager Mike Nass, his board and Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce President Nathan Sondgeroth within an expansive hangar unforeseen in the city. The space, along with a new airport terminal and sleeker facility amenities, was a reason for all to celebrate a grand opening event and ribbon cutting. The project was an upgrade of an airport designed in the 1940s.



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Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce president Nathan Sondgeroth (left) observes the spacious new 10,000 square foot Municipal Airport hangar, Thursday, as airport manager Mike Nass looks on.

“Now we’re up to state-of-the-art facilities,” Nass said. “We are sitting in a really good position now where we’ve met most of our goals.”

Construction cost \$1.7 million conducted by Clinton Engineering, with grant dollars coming from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Clinton County Development Association and Iowa Department of Transportation. When the company broke ground in December 2013 — amid one of the coldest winters on record — there were already signs that the project would miss its projected June completion date.

West of town, surrounded by open farmland, the Clinton winter took a harsh toll on construction,

forcing several delays. However, during Thursday's event, Nass and others said they couldn't be happier with the end results.

"It's extremely satisfying to have this project get done," Nass said. "It's been in the planning for four or five years and under construction for a little more than a year. It's very satisfying to finally see it done."

Strategically, the renovation comes at an important time for the city. The airport is positioned just north of perhaps Clinton's most enticing potential job-creator — the Lincolnway Industrial Rail and Air Park.

Nass said Clinton and the airport "lost business" in the past because companies prospecting the city had nowhere closer than Moline, Illinois, to house private jets. Now, within a 10,000 square-foot hangar that contained a large jet and rang with applause on Thursday: "We can put airplanes like this inside a storage building," Nass said.

Jenelle Kreiling was wearing two hats during the event: one as member of the Clinton Municipal Airport Commission; another as economic development specialist for the Clinton Regional Development Corporation. She explained, as a partner with the city for the railpark, that the airport expansion increases Clinton's national industrial attraction.

"This obviously gives (prospective business executives) a quick turnaround in coming to town," said Kreiling, adding executives like to visit multiple sites in a day by air. "Hopefully this will be a very good selling point to them."

After recent upgrades to the airport's runways, Nass said the hangar-terminal project aligns the facility for long-term stability. Smaller projects, like one that involves digging up underground fuel tanks proposed for the next fiscal year, will continue to take place.

But this project was one of the final pieces to bring the Clinton Municipal Airport to "where it needs to be."

"This definitely makes us more competitive," Nass said.

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