

Airport projects total \$20.7 million

■ *New facility near Williamson tops the list of aviation development*

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Projects at airports around the state received \$20.7 million in funding last August and October and are either under way or will get started this year, according to the West Virginia Department of Transportation's Aeronautics Commission.

The largest single project is the creation of a new airport near Williamson, Mingo County. The Federal Aviation Administration has approved a 5,000-foot-long runway for the Mingo County Air Transportation Park.

The airport's total estimated cost is \$10 million to \$12 million, said Mike Whitt, executive director of the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority. The project previously received \$3.6 million. It received \$3.9 million more in October. There was a groundbreaking ceremony in August.

Alpha Natural Resources donated nearly 900 acres for the airport, which is being built on the site of a former mountaintop mine. Also involved: the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority, Mingo County Airport Authority, state Aeronautics Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Susan Chernenko, director of the Aeronautics Commission, said the project is unusual in that so many private and public entities are involved.

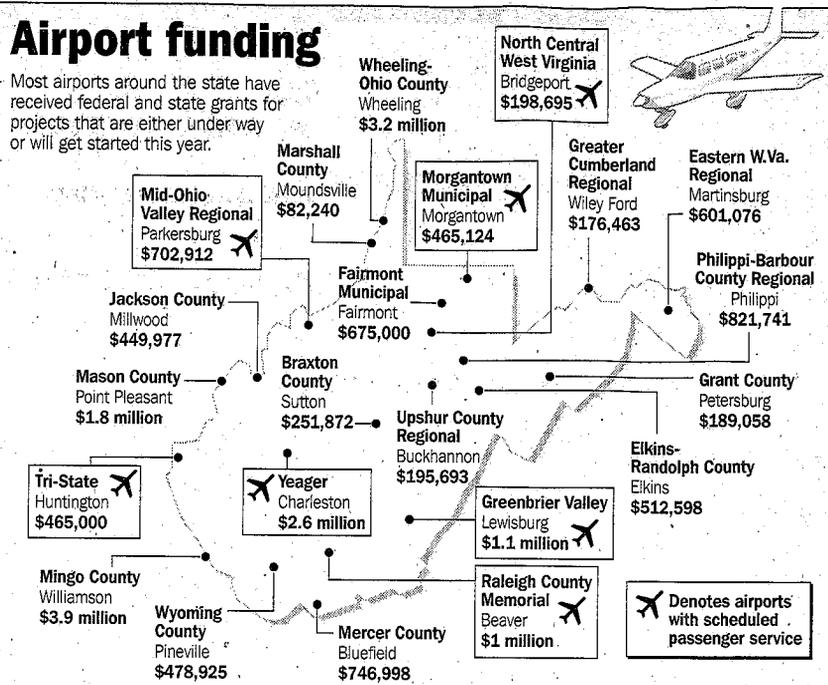
The second-largest project is a \$3.3 million runway safety improvement project at the Wheeling-Ohio County Airport at Wheeling.

The third-largest project is the \$2.5 million rehabilitation of two taxiways at Yeager Airport. Rick Atkinson, airport director, said the work was finished in October.

Atkinson said Yeager also has been working on several projects that total \$4.9 million and are 100 percent funded with federal stimulus money. About \$1 million was invested in a new baggage carousel and new conveyor belts. The rest of the stimulus money is being spent to build a canopy over the front of the terminal.

Airport funding

Most airports around the state have received federal and state grants for projects that are either under way or will get started this year.



Source: W.Va. Department of Transportation's Aeronautics Commission

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Steel for the canopy began going up on Monday and the project is more than 50 percent complete. As part of the canopy project, the walkways in front of the terminal and the metered parking lot have been re-done, he said.

As for the grants awarded by the Aeronautics Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration provides 95 percent of the funding. Historically the Aeronautics Commission has provided 2.5 percent in state matching funds and required a local 2.5 percent match. But last April the commission announced that for grants approved from then until June 30, 2010, it would provide the entire 5 percent that the FAA does not fund.

Chernenko said, "These projects are critically important to the economy of the state. We need to keep our airports up to date. We're competing not only with other states, we're trying to attract more business."

The state has seven airports with regularly scheduled commercial passenger service. All are receiving funding. In addition to the taxiway rehabilitation at Yeager:

■ Greenbrier Valley Airport, Lewisburg, received \$1 million to renovate its terminal and make parking improvements.

■ Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Airport, Parkersburg, received \$670,912 to design the renovation of runway lighting and to refurbish its terminal.

■ Morgantown Municipal Airport received \$465,124 for the first phase of a terminal rehabilitation project and for runway incursion markings.

■ The North Central West Virginia Airport at Bridgeport received \$198,695 to install perimeter fencing.

■ The Raleigh County Memorial Airport at Beaver received \$783,747 to rehabilitate runway and taxiway lighting and \$265,000 to update the airport master plan and conduct an air traffic control tower study.

■ Tri-State Airport, Huntington, received \$370,000 to construct improvements at its terminal building and \$95,000 to construct a taxiway.

Of the \$20.7 million in projects that are either under way or will get under way this year using FAA and Aeronautics Commission grants, \$6.5 million or 31 percent will be spent at the seven commercial aviation airports and \$14.2 million or 68 percent will be spent at 15 general aviation airports.

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