

New-look airport ready to greet passengers

by Jeremiah Shelor
STAFF WRITER

BRIDGEPORT — North Central West Virginia Airport will have a new look for 2015.

After beginning construction in the fall of 2014, crews are now wrapping up work on a series of improvements to the local airport's terminal.

The improvements include a new paved, lighted parking area, new roofing, new windows and an all-new terminal canopy. Altogether, the renovations represent a total investment of around \$1 million.

Money for the improvements came through the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Improvement Program.

Past funding from the program had been put toward improvements to the inside of the terminal, according to Airport Director Rick Rock.



Rock

With this round of improvements, the airport has been able to address issues affecting the terminal's exterior, Rock said.

"Over the last five years, we've kind of been building up to that. We knew some of the challenges we had. We started with the inside of our terminal, just being able to accommodate 150-160 passengers at a time," Rock said. "Once we focused on our inside and were able to put together a layout that looked more pleasing and more modern, we wanted to move to the outside, which is the first thing our passengers will see."

Probably the most visible improvement to the airport's exterior will be the new terminal canopy, which will be taller and wider than the original.

"The canopy that was there before was so low that we couldn't pull a bus underneath of it, and it was only a single

lane of traffic, so it was difficult to get cars in and out of there," said Chad Biller, the airport's engineer. "It's just going to make it a lot better for the public when they're coming to the airport to be dropped off."

"It will make it function like a true airport."

Rock agreed.

"From a functional standpoint, our old canopy just outlived its useful life," Rock said. "We had a lot of problems that occurred with leaking, and the aesthetic value was poor."

Biller noted that the new terminal canopy will also address sign issues that had made it harder for passengers to find their way when visiting North Central West Virginia Airport.

"One of the issues we had was just the ability for people to find the terminal," Rock said. "From a flow standpoint, we'll be able to flow people in and out of the airport much easier."

In February, the airport announced that Allegiant Air will be offering direct flights to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, this summer. It was only a year and a half ago that North Central West Virginia Airport partnered with Allegiant to offer flights to Orlando-Sanford International Airport in Florida.

With these expansions to the airport's commercial air service, Rock said the new terminal renovations will help accommodate the additional traffic while also creating a strong first impression for new passengers.

"As we bring a whole new clientele to our community, we want to make sure we put our best foot forward," Rock said. "With the old canopy, there wasn't enough room. We were basically able to double the amount of people we can move through here, and we wanted to continue to see that growth."

The addition of the Myrtle Beach flights will mean as many as 300 people moving



Staff photo by Jeremiah Shelor

The airport's new terminal canopy will have significantly more space to accommodate cars and even buses.

through the airport each day, Rock said.

"It will give us an opportunity to introduce ourselves to new customers, and certainly our goal is to earn our business back," Rock said.

The new 15-foot terminal canopy — which resembles an airplane wing — is sure to make an impression on visitors. Biller said a lot of time and attention went into the look of the canopy, which will be more modern, blending with the original brick that covers the terminal's facade.

"We tried to keep it so that it would match but would also have a more modern look to it," Biller said. "We have a staff of architects and landscape architects. We worked with Rick and the airport to get it to look the way they wanted and the way Rick wanted."

See AIRPORT, C7



Staff photo by Jeremiah Shelor

The airport's main terminal entrance was blocked throughout the winter, but officials say the new canopy will significantly improve convenience for passengers.

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