



ASPEN/PITKIN COUNTY AIRPORT

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Airport Runway Extension Project Gets Underway This Week

1,000 feet of runway to be added for take offs only by next ski season

(Aspen, CO) Construction of the first phase of the long-awaited Aspen/Pitkin County Airport runway extension began Monday, April 4th. The first phase of the project includes installation of the new City of Aspen domestic water connection to the Buttermilk Metro District (BMD) water system, removal of the existing BMD water wells south of the runway, and relocation of some utilities. Nearly all of the first phase of the project will occur between 7am and 5pm weekdays through June 20th and will not impact airport operations.

“We’re excited to be starting work on this project,” said Assistant Director of Aviation, David Ulane. “The good news is, the work can occur while the airport remains open and will have minimal impact on our air service as a whole,” Ulane said.

The only impact to airport service is expected during two, three day periods this fall. In order to maintain the FAA-mandated 1,000 foot safety area between construction activities and aircraft on the runway, the runway will be shortened temporarily from 7,000 to 6,500 then to 6,000 feet. This shortening is accomplished by temporarily repainting the runway markings to reflect a shorter available length. It does not require removing existing runway pavement. Because the 6,000’ runway length is insufficient for SkyWest Airlines’ CRJ-700 aircraft to operate, United Airlines’ service will temporarily cease for two three day periods between September 13 to September 15th and again from October 4th through October 6th. The temporary shorter runway will not prohibit the operations of Frontier Airlines Q-400 aircraft, or most of the general aviation aircraft that operate out of the airport, although some flights may be subject to weight reductions on the shortened runway during this time.

“This is purely a safety measure required by the FAA,” Ulane said.” “We have coordinated this phase of the project with SkyWest and United, and flights on those days will be removed from United’s reservations system,” Ulane said.

The September-October phase of the project will include relocation of the FAA’s localizer antenna situated on the airport just south of the end Aspen of the runway. “This is a different localizer antenna than the one on Aspen Mountain that the FAA replaced with some difficulty last fall,” Ulane said. “We expect this relocation to go much more smoothly because we’ve had much more time to plan ahead, and the relocation will be closely supervised by the airport’s project manager,” Ulane said. “This localizer is at the end of our runway, not on a mountaintop, and relocating it will be much more straightforward,” Ulane noted.

The runway extension project is expected to be complete in early November 2011, in time for the 2011/2012 ski season. The lengthened runway Total project cost is \$15.4 million, of which the FAA is funding 82% (\$12.6 million), the Colorado Division of Aeronautics funding 3% (\$447,000), and the airport enterprise fund reserves are funding the local share of 15% (\$2.4 million). The 1,000 foot extension at the south (Aspen) end of the runway will allow aircraft to take off from the airport with additional passenger and fuel loads and fly to more distant destinations. Aircraft have historically operated at less than full capacity in Aspen, especially in summer when higher temperatures limit aircraft performance at the airport’s high elevation. The runway extension does not alter the airport’s existing 95’ wingspan or 100,000 pound landing weight limitations.

Progress updates will be available throughout the project’s duration on the airport’s planning website at www.aspenairportplanning.com.

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