Airport upgrades to be ready for Clemson football

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — New improvements are coming to the Oconee County Regional Airport just in time for the start of the Clemson football season, which ushers in the busy fall season at the local airport.

Members of the Oconee County Aeronautics Commission learned more about the scheduled improvements from airport director Sam Carver during the commission's meeting Thursday night.

The upgrades include a new stub taxiway, airfield redesignation and restriping of taxiways to comply with new Federal Aviation Administration standards.

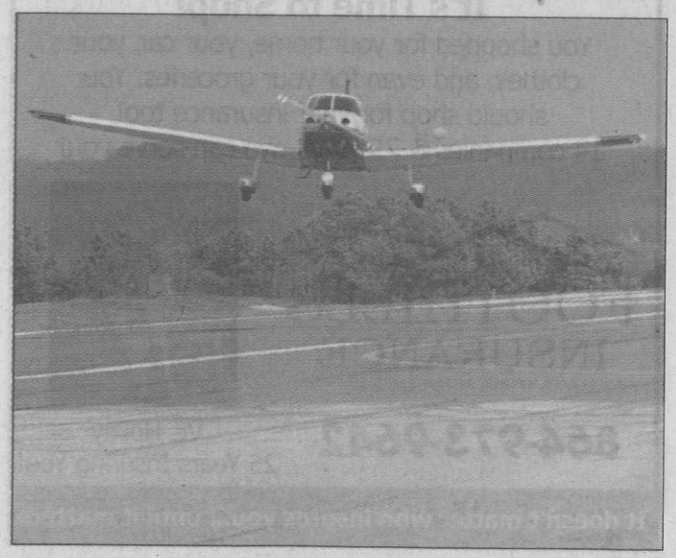
Carver estimated the improvements will cost less than $400,000 and be completed by Sept. 1. Clemson is scheduled to kick off its football season Sept. 5 when it hosts Wofford at Memorial Stadium.

The key upgrade is adding a stub taxiway that will split the distance at the airport's 5,000-foot runway. Now, there are taxiways at both ends of the runway that slow down traffic during peak season. The additional taxiway cuts down on the

SEE **UPGRADES**, PAGE **A7**

FOR MORE

New Oconee County Regional Airport director is settling into what he hopes will be a long tenure in the Golden Corner. To read more, turn to page **A5**.



FILE

Improvements coming to the Oconee County Regional Airport are expected to be completed by Sept. 1, just in time for the beginning of the Clemson football season, according to airport director Sam Carver.

UPGRADES: Bids are due by April 30

FROM PAGE A1

time it takes for planes to exit or enter the runway.

"It's all based on FAA standards from what they look for," Carver said. "It was recognized as a safety issue that I guess came up during really busy times like on game weekends. Pilots are waiting to land and, you know, they can't land safely until all the other aircraft have cleared."

The painting of the centerlines all along the taxiways will give the airstrip a consistent look that pilots will appreciate as they approach the runway, Carver added.

Oconee County advertised for sealed bids on the project that are due no later than 2 p.m. on April 30. Potential bidders are encouraged to attend a pre-bid conference at the airport, located at 365 Airport Road, at 11 a.m. on Tuesday.

The FAA will cover 90 percent of the cost of the project, with Oconee and the state splitting the other 10 percent.

"We started this project at this time with the mindset we'd be completed for football season," Carver said.

The airport operates on a budget of about $900,000. Carver said revenues are currently about $18,000 more than expenditures.

Annually, jet fuel sales ($500,000) and revenue from leasing hangars ($117,000) are the airport's big moneymakers.

Oconee has 48 hangars after building eight additional ones in 2011, but there is a waiting list to lease one, according to Carver.

"The next priority for me is to build more T-hangars because there's such a demand for them," Carver said. "That brings in more airplanes to the community, more tax dollars and more everything."

carlos@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686
Follow on Twitter @cgvnewsupstate