

Travelers check in at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport on Monday.

11-22-11

New terminal to open up fliers' gateway to Upstate

Airport to get new technology in project that could start late next year

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Passengers at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport can expect to be greeted in a few years with a new design that will open the lobby to more daylight, add new technology to make services more efficient and automate baggage screening.

It is all part of a plan to expand and renovate the airport terminal that Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport commissioners advanced Monday, approving the schematic design and an increased project cost of $102.24 million.

Design development can now begin, and plans are to start construction in late 2012, with completion in approximately 24 months.

"The airport is like a beautiful campus. But the interior has not always matched the exterior," said Stephen Harrill, vice president with the RS&H design and planning firm.

Leland Burch, GSP commission member, said he was pleased that the terminal, built in 1962, wouldn't have to be torn down to expand and modernize.

"We wanted to capture today's Upstate history in the terminal," said Harrill, pointing out the natural environment, the Southern hospitality and the international flavor of the region. "We wanted to bring the natural environment a little bit to the interior."

Burch said, "It's not going to cost the airlines any more to operate. There are no taxes involved."

"It's a great job," said Minor Shaw, commission chair. "It's been a tremendous team effort."

The new design, while maintaining much of the existing structure, opens the lobby to more daylight, adds new technology, expands the ticket lobby, automates the baggage screening process, expands and combines the passenger screening area and shifts many of the concession areas beyond screening, Harrill said.

Plans are to use stone, wood and tile to warm the terminal, which was built in an industrial modern style in 1962, he said. The only other major construction occurred in 1989 when the terminal was expanded.

Dave Edwards, GSP president and chief executive, said the airport would self-fund about 70 percent of the project cost while the remainder would come from Airport Improvement Project funds, other annual entitlement funds and various government grants.

Much of the front of the terminal, which now is solid, will be a glass wall, Harrill said.

Allowing natural sunlight in will reduce electrical use during the day and make it appear warmer. Canopies will run the length

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of the curbside arrival and departure zones.

Daylight "is a more enjoyable atmosphere. It also means we can turn the lights off during the day," Harrill said.

The ticket lobby will be larger because airline offices are being pushed back farther.

TSA baggage screening will be more automated behind the ticket areas, with a conveyor taking the bags out of the building.

Although the current ceiling will remain, plans are to have "floating components" to lower the ceiling and warm the atmosphere. The areas in the lobby where people stand or sit will be carpeted while the heavy-traffic areas will be floored in tile.

Rental car facilities — now on the first floor of the terminal — will be moved to Garage A. A canopy will extend from both garages to the terminal.

A waiting area will be placed near the baggage claim area next to the escalator, Harrill said. Also, concession areas and restrooms will be available on that level.

Level 2 will be accessible by two elevators, two escalators and stairs, he said.

The screening area will be in the middle of the second floor with a large queueing area that will funnel passengers to one screening location. A glass wall will allow those waiting to be screened to look out toward the front of the terminal toward the fountain and the lawn. Combining the two screening areas will allow for more efficient staffing.

"It's dramatically bigger to allow people to move through quick and easy," Harrill said.

Past the screening area will be food and retail concessions.

The Windows restaurant will be renovated. A large glass wall will overlook the garden and a patio area where passengers waiting to board a plane can eat.

Also, a large clock is planned, a reference to the historic and city clocks found in towns throughout the Upstate.

The two concourses will remain on the third floor. They won't be connected but passengers will be able to look from one concourse to the other. Concession areas will be built at the end of each one.

Behind the scenes will be new building controls and monitoring, rainwater harvesting for use in the terminal, low-flow equipment in the restrooms, occupancy sensors to turn lights on and off, LED or other efficient lighting and a new more efficient HVAC system.

