Oconee airport receives $2.6M FAA grant

Federal money will be used for 5,000-foot runway

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SENECA — The Oconee County Regional Airport took another step toward realizing its goal for a 5,000-foot runway.

On Tuesday, U.S. Rep. Gresham Barrett, R-Westminster, announced that the Federal Aviation Administration awarded Oconee's local airport a $2.6 million grant for the runway extension project.

Barrett said the money would go to complete construction of the proposed 600-foot extension that would increase the length of runway to 5,000 feet.

The airport expects its revenues to soar once the 5,000-foot runway is in place, allowing for bigger corporate jets to land. According to a statewide economic impact study in 2004, airports with at least 5,000 feet of runway generate an economic impact of almost $7 million.

Barrett said that completion of the project would enable the airport to attract a wider variety of aircraft.

"This is an enormous opportunity for Oconee County," Barrett said. "These upgrades will help create more opportunities for economic development across Oconee County, which will translate into more job opportunities for its citizens."

Earlier this month, the Oconee County Council agreed to receive the FAA's $2.6 million grant, which includes a county and state match of $68,811 each.