

FAA greenlights new runway at RDU International Airport

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge December 21, 2017

The Federal Aviation Administration has approved Raleigh-Durham International Airport's layout plan, the final step in its master planning process.

The approval allows RDU to begin work on more than \$2.7 billion in aviation infrastructure and amenities, including a new international runway.

RDU received notice of the approval Nov. 20, and notified board members Thursday prior to the Airport Authority meeting.

"We look forward to working with you on the development of your airport," concludes the letter, addressed to RDU CEO Michael Landguth and signed by Bernard Green, airport planner at the FAA Memphis Airports District Office.

RDU spokesman Andrew Sawyer says the approved plan is "virtually" similar to what was voted on by RDU's board in October of 2016.

"It just has an FAA stamp," he says.

Kristie Van Auken, vice president of communications and community affairs, cautions that, as with all projects of this magnitude, RDU will still have to go through an environmental regulatory process.

"But we are very excited about this because this is the greenlight for us to move forward," she says, noting that the runway replacement is still the "number one priority" identified in the plan. "Essentially... this says, 'okay airport, we agree in principle with the direction that you've laid out for the growth projections we see here.'"

But it could still be another seven years before RDU holds a ribbon cutting on the runway. "It all depends on what the environmental analysis finds," she says. "We're anxious to get started."

The Vision2040 plan contains projects across the spectrum, and includes a Terminal 2 expansion – which Van Auken says will be necessary to meet future gate demand as airlines add new flights. "Our passenger numbers are already exceeding forecasts," Van Auken says.

Plans also call for a consolidated rental car facility – accessible directly from the terminals instead of by shuttle.

But the centerpiece of the entire plan is the runway. The current runway 5L-23R, which will be used during the construction of the new strip, is nearing the end of its useful life. The runway hosts RDU's flights to London and Paris.

In certain conditions, the existing runway would be capable of RDU's dream service – a nonstop flight to China. But for a regular, 365-days a year nonstop Asian service, a new runway is essential, airport executives have said. And, as Landguth's plans for a nonstop Chinese service move forward, it will likely be an essential part of the equation.

While RDU had submitted its updated plan to the FAA in October, the FAA had been working with RDU for well over a year, Van Auken says.

In the meantime, the airport has already moved forward on taxiway improvements that will "enable us to get to the construction level," says Sawyer. As construction commences, concrete and asphalt in and around the airfield will be taking extra loads – making improvements necessary across the board. Many of those projects start construction in early 2018.

FAA approves RDU's long-range growth plans

WRAL.com By Matthew Burns December 21, 2017

Morrisville, N.C. — The Federal Aviation Administration has given conditional approval to Raleigh-Durham International Airport to embark on \$2.7 billion in upgrades as part of the airport's Vision 2040 long-range plan, officials said Thursday.

"We will invest billions in aviation infrastructure, creating jobs and connecting the Triangle to the globe," RDU President and Chief Executive Michael Landguth said in a statement. "We will also enhance the traveler experience with new technology, amenities and strengthened security." 1

The master plan was developed over the last two years through a series of workshops covering everything from population growth to aviation forecasts to land use alternatives.

The final plan, which the RDU Airport Authority approved more than a year ago, calls for building a 10,000-foot runway 500 feet to the west of the existing runway near Terminal 2. The existing runway was built more than 30 years ago and is showing its age, officials said. 1

The shift in the runway location means Terminal 2 could be extended, creating up to 19 additional gates, and taxiways would move into the area of the current runway. The new runway also could be extended, if needed, to accommodate larger aircraft on trans-Atlantic and transcontinental flights.

Up to four gates could be added to Terminal 1 under the proposal.

The plan also calls for building another parking deck between the terminals, where rental car operations also would be consolidated. A ground transportation center for shuttle buses, taxis and limousines also will be placed between the terminals to reduce traffic congestion.

RDU's air cargo and general aviation areas also could expand as needed under the plan.

Airport officials said some projects are already in the design phase, but the RDU Airport Authority still must determine how to finance the projects. FAA officials said each project at RDU also must pass environmental muster before construction can begin.

Route for Wake toll road clears major environmental hurdle

WRAL.com By Bryan Mims, Matthew Burns December 21, 2017

RALEIGH, N.C. — State and federal officials on Friday signed a key environmental impact statement for the completion of N.C. Highway 540 in southern Wake County.

Garner Mayor Ronnie Williams called the signing a "nice Christmas present," noting that the North Carolina Turnpike Authority and the state Department of Transportation hadn't expected to get the final clearance until next August.

Turnpike officials said it is a major step in preparing for construction of the final leg of the N.C. 540 toll road, also known as the Triangle Expressway, from the N.C. Highway 55 Bypass in Apex to U.S. Highway 264 in Knightdale.

"This has come so early that we're still assessing what the impact of this is to our schedule," said Beau Memory, executive director of the Turnpike Authority. "It certainly means we are ahead of schedule, and we hope to continue on that pace as we complete the study process."

The latest DOT plans call for construction to begin in 2020 or 2021 on the sections between Apex and U.S. Highway 401 and between U.S. 401 and Interstate 40. The last stretch, between I-40 and U.S. 264, is scheduled to start construction in 2027.

The public now has the opportunity to review the environmental impact statement and comment on it. DOT and the Turnpike Authority plan to hold public hearings to gather feedback on design plans.