

Eastern Iowa Airport developing strategic plan

Staff, community to update mission, vision statements



Marty Lenss Airport director

George C. Ford, The Gazette

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CEDAR RAPIDS — The Eastern Iowa Airport, with input from its staff, the Cedar Rapids Airport Commission and the public, will be developing a strategic plan to shape its next three to five years.

Airport Director Marty Lenss said the airport's mission and vision statements will be updated to reflect the current state of the aviation industry.

“Our mission statement is very dated, so it’s time to take a look at that,” Lenss said. “What’s our vision statement as an organization and as a community? What do we want to see the community’s airport be in the future?”

Lenss said a set of core values and business principles will be developed along with the strategic plan through a process that includes the airport’s employees.

“We will talk about what the airport means to them and the core values in the organizational culture,” Lenss said. “I envision the development of five to seven work-plan items that will drive the focus of the organization over the next three- to five-year planning horizon.

“We will revisit that document every three to five years with the commission and staff to determine if we need to update the work-plan items. We will benchmark the work plans because it’s often said that ‘What’s measured is what gets done.’”

The airport recently updated its 20-year master plan, which is based on projects like runway or terminal improvements or parking lot expansions. Lenss said the business-based strategic plan will examine issues like sources of airport revenue.

“Eighty percent of the airport’s revenue stream is directly or indirectly derived from airline service — landing fees, terminal rent, passenger facility charges, customer facility charges and terminal concessions,” he said. “One of the conversations I envision having within the Corridor is revenue diversification, which is a very popular topic for airports these days.

Lenss said consolidation has been good for the health of the airlines, but it has made it tougher for airports to recruit new air service and retain existing service.

The airport derives nonairline-related revenue from the farmland it rents to area farmers. It also leases land to retailer Nordstrom Direct for its online and direct mail fulfillment center.

The airport has an application pending with the Iowa Economic Development Authority for 700 acres of development-ready land to be designated as the state’s first “super park” under the Iowa Certified Sites program. The process should be done in July.

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“We will be looking at how we market that property through our strategic partnerships with the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, Iowa City Area Development Group and the state,” Lenss said.

“What kind of jobs do we want to see for that property and what kind of projects would we like to see? We want that to be very successful for the community and help us diversify our revenues.

“We want it to match and complement our airport master planning activity and not complicate it.”

Lenss said a steering committee will develop the strategic plan. Public comments will be sought from residents and businesses in the seven-county area and beyond served by the airport.

When the plan is completed over an eight- to 10-month period, the Airport Commission will be asked to approve it.

“We need to make the strategic plan is not a document that sits on a shelf after it is completed,” Lenss said. “I take responsibility for that very personally.”