

# BOEING

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MQ-25 is benefitting from the two years of early flight test data, which has been integrated back into its digital models to strengthen the digital thread connecting aircraft design to production to test to operations and sustainment.

T1 will be used to conduct a deck handling demonstration aboard a U.S. Navy carrier in the coming months to help advance the carrier integration progress.

The new MQ-25 facility will include state-of-the-art manufacturing processes and tools, including robotic automation and advanced assembly techniques, to improve product quality and employee ergonomics.

“The team and state-of-the-art technology we’re bringing to the Navy’s MQ-25 program is unprecedented, and we’re incredibly proud to be expanding both as we build the future of autonomous systems in Illinois,” said Kristin Robertson, vice president and general manager of Autonomous Systems, Boeing Defense, Space & Security. “We’ve received great support from MidAmerica Airport and countless dedicated employees, and we’re excited to build the Navy’s first operational, carrier-based unmanned aircraft right here in the Metro East.”

The U.S. Navy intends to procure more than 70 MQ-25 aircraft to help extend the range of its carrier air wing, and the majority of those will be built in the new facility. Boeing is currently producing the first seven MQ-25 aircraft, plus two ground test articles, at its St. Louis facilities, and they will be transported to MidAmerica for flight tests. The MQ-25 program office, including its core engineering team, will remain based in St. Louis.

Technology aside, it is the employment factor and the potential for future growth that really excites local officials.

“The investments being made at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport by Boeing and the State of Illinois are a great



The MQ-25 Stingray, the Navy’s first carrier-based unmanned aircraft, an aerial refueling drone nicknamed the T1.

example of how we can bring public and private partners together to maximize the benefit for the region and for those around the world who rely on the airport,” said Airport Director Bryan Johnson. “These latest investments will generate significant revenue for the airport, increase operations, reinforce our strong relationship with Boeing, create local jobs, catalyze further development at the airport and create further synergies with Scott Air Force Base.”

Even other airports in Southern Illinois expect to see some effects.

David Miller, director of St. Louis Regional Airport in East Alton, said the size of the MidAmerica construction dwarf’s his airport’s largest building, which is one operated by tenant West Star Aviation, at 120,000 square feet.

“I think it’s great. It’s going to mean a lot for that airport and it’s going to mean a lot for the area. It’s even going to mean something for this airport,” Miller said. “In our arrangement with Boeing, this airport would be used as an alternate if they can’t get one of their drones back into Scott Air Force Base for some reason. It could be a passing storm, snowplow on the runway or civil disobedience. It just shows you how things trickle up.”

The formal announcement drew a number of name dignitaries, including Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin and St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern.

During his speech, the governor characterized the project as an investment in the Illinois workforce by the world’s largest aerospace company.

“I want to thank the Boeing Company for their vote of confidence in Illinois, as well as St. Clair County leadership and the MidAmerica Airport team for giving companies another reason to choose Illinois,” he said.

The project was made possible in part by an EDGE agreement from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. EDGE is a tool used to support companies making large scale capital investments that lead to significant job creation. As a tax credit, the EDGE program allows a firm to reduce costs of doing business in Illinois when compared with similar costs in other states where it could have located its operation. As part of its agreement with the state, Boeing has committed to the \$200 million over a 15-year period.

Durbin said Boeing was already an institution in the St. Louis region for decades, employing more than 15,000 people.

“Right here, MidAmerica Airport, it is a cornfield now, but it is going to be a field of dreams when it comes to aviation and protecting America,” Durbin said.

“The MQ-25 Stingray represents the future of the U.S. navy’s aircraft carrier mission. While vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Defense, I was proud to support more than \$1.4 billion in Navy investments in this aircraft over the last four fiscal years,” Durbin said.

The senator also noted that he and colleague Sen. Tammy Duckworth worked to get MidAmerica Airport a \$12.6 million federal grant for its expan-

sion project from the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program and COVID-19 relief packages.

The new MQ-25 facility will be in addition to existing manufacturing operations at Boeing St. Clair, which produces components for the CH-47 Chinook, F/A-18 Super Hornet, and other defense products.

“We are very excited about this project and look forward to a long and successful partnership with St. Clair County and Boeing,” Mayor Pat McMahan said. “We hope this will be the impetus for more development along the Route 4/I-64 corridor and in turn provide a greater property and sales tax base for Mascoutah.”

Kern noted that Boeing has had a presence at MidAmerica for more than a decade.

“The jobs and economic opportunities provided by Boeing’s presence and growth propel this entire region forward, and it wouldn’t be possible without the support and investment from the State of Illinois,” Kern said.

MidAmerica is owned by St. Clair County. The 20-year lease was approved on Aug. 31 by the St. Clair County Public Building Commission, which oversees MidAmerica. The terms of the lease agreement call for Boeing to pay a fair market value in rent with that revenue being designated exclusively toward the capital and operating costs of the airport.

During the St. Clair County Board meeting on Aug. 30, board members approved the use of a no-cost easement along Route 4 that will allow Mascoutah to extend a water main to service the new site and to remove some trees and do related work. Gas, electricity, sewer and fiber optic cable will also be extended to the site.

The easement runs north of the Norfolk & Southern Railroad line toward the airport property, according to engineering information provided by Gonzalez Companies, LLC of O’Fallon.

Aided by \$57 million in Rebuild Illinois capital funds, the airport will deliver taxiway and airfield enhancements surrounding the new Boeing production facility and significant upgrades to the passenger terminal facility.

A new taxiway will be constructed connecting the new Boeing project with the airfield; and improvements made to the nearby highway interchange.

The easement agreement has no financial impact on the airport or the county, officials said.

*Writers Pamela Rensing, Randy Pierce and Dennis Grubaugh contributed to this report.*

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