



St. Louis Downtown Airport looks to growth in 2022

After weathering challenges posed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the team at St. Louis Downtown Airport (KCPS) is optimistic about 2022 and is looking forward to continued growth at the airport.

Some of that growth will stem from the \$5 million state grant recently awarded to the airport from the \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois capital infrastructure plan Gov. Pritzker signed into law in 2019. Bi-State Development owns and operates St. Louis Downtown Airport, which is located on 1,000 acres in Cahokia Heights and Sauget.

The funding will cover the cost of building a Ground Engine Run-Up facility, which is a critical improvement that will benefit four aircraft maintenance providers operating at St. Louis Downtown Airport. This project will support more than 450 high-tech aerospace manufacturing jobs by improving production safety, reliability and efficiency, improving airport businesses and increasing global competitiveness for Southwestern Illinois and the State of Illinois. The project has been in the works for several years and construction is expected to begin in 2022.

“This Engine Run-Up facility will provide new opportunities to expand aerospace manufacturing opportunities at St. Louis Downtown Airport, resulting in job growth and private sector investment at this site,” said Taulby Roach, president and chief executive officer of Bi-State Development. “We greatly appreciate the support of state Sen. Christopher Belt and



A panoramic view of St. Louis Downtown Airport.

state Rep, LaToya Greenwood in advocating for this funding and are confident that it will enable us to continue to grow the annual economic impact of our airport.”

St. Louis Downtown Airport is the busiest general aviation airport in Illinois outside of Chicago and has an economic impact of more than \$580 million per year, according to the most recent State of Illinois Aviation Economic Impact Study (2012).

The Engine Run-Up project includes new airfield pavement with jet blast deflectors to perform aircraft maintenance tests requiring the operation of an engine at high power on the ground for several minutes generating elevated noise levels. The tenants that will specifically benefit from this project conduct more than 500 high-power engine run-up tests a year and have indicated while the existing locations have worked previously, they are insufficient today given the powerful engines of modern aircraft. The proposed Engine

Run-Up will be located 1,850 feet from other parked aircraft and isolated from airport operations with a ground run-up enclosure. The enclosure will reduce aircraft Engine Run-Up noise by more than 50 percent and surround all but one side of the apron, and it will be designed to accommodate the airport’s largest aircraft.

The project is necessary to support current and future operations of key airport tenants and is part of the airport’s overall infrastructure implementation plan which supports 25 airport tenant manufacturing and aviation operations, ensures tenant leasehold longevity and supports future airport business growth.

The potential for future growth is also evident in the strong rebound in flights taking advantage of the airport’s unmatched location to Downtown St. Louis and the surrounding region. From companies that have resumed business travel to major concert acts that have been

rolling into town, the airport has been pleased to welcome a growing numbers of flights each month. Between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31, 2021, KCPS hosted more than 85,600 flight operations, an increase of more than 3,500 operations compared to the same period in 2019. That’s a clear sign the airport is emerging stronger than ever following the pandemic-related challenges the past two years.

Another highlight for 2021 was the recognition of St. Louis Downtown Airport as the 2020 Reliever Airport of the Year by the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Division of Aeronautics. Illinois airports that were recognized were selected because of their accomplishments, including an outstanding partnership with IDOT and a strong commitment to customer safety and satisfaction. St. Louis Downtown Airport remains committed to customer and pilot safety and satisfaction as we embrace the new year.



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