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AIRPORT NEWS

Extra Edition

September 17, 2024

Caldwell Executive Airport

Hubler Terminal

4814 E. Linden Street

Caldwell, Idaho 83605

Airport Operations Manager Rob Oates

(208) 459-9779

www.caldwellairport.com

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A.I.P. Construction Project - Additional Information

Some airport users may be new to Caldwell Executive Airport (EUL) and have not been through a construction project and may be curious about how we set things up. The info below will build on what was provided in the September "Airport News" distributed last week. The announcement last week was complete, but some may find what follows helpful. Most of the answers below are a portion of a larger discussion, but hopefully there will be enough here to make sense of what we are doing.

1. Why build in October rather than in some poor flying month?

In a word, Congress. Congress funds projects at airports like EUL through a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) program named the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Airport and Airways Trust funds are used in this program [*they come almost entirely from revenue from taxes and fees levied on airplane operations, which include taxes on airplane tickets as well as fuel used by general aviation aircraft*] and are provided by the Congress to the FAA for distribution to airports for eligible projects related to maintaining existing asphalt or building new asphalt or certain other projects. Airport engineers and owners create a list of projects geared toward maintaining or expanding airport facilities. The lists of eligible projects are reviewed, amended and ultimately agreed to by FAA airports engineers in Airports District Offices (ADO) all over the country. In our case the ADO serving EUL is in Helena, Montana.

We do attempt to schedule construction projects to minimize the negative impact to all airport users. And in most years, we face negative externalities over which we can exert little to no influence. The most obvious example is the fact that Idaho's asphalt construction "season" has a very limited time window each year. And as it works out our asphalt projects tend to be among the smaller fish in the construction pond from which contractors can choose to submit bids. State, federal, and private projects of all shapes and sizes are out there in the market at the same time we are competing for the same finite number of construction firms to ultimately plan to do the work during the same time window.

Our asphalt projects tend to be led by an asphalt construction company with the support of a variety of sub-contractors who provide specialized services of one sort or another. Most of the time "subs" are fairly readily available, but I do want to highlight one. When we do work related to the runway or parallel taxiways, electricians become a key player required for successful project completion. The timing of the last Taxiway A project was impacted by the COVID-induced supply chain disruption that was still affecting availability of the electrical components that were required. Some of those residual effects are still in play and make it difficult to forecast precise deliver schedules for some items. As bad as that is, a potentially larger issue has been the availability of the electricians themselves in

this market. The demand for electricians has shot up in recent years due to typical construction projects like residential subdivisions and commercial building projects. Layered on top of all that our valley has attracted the attention of big tech players and constructing their data centers here tends to consume very large numbers of electricians for long time periods.

Since we were working a planned, eligible project we had our project specifications out for competitive bid early in April. We were planning for our project to start the actual construction in July - to then be completed in early September. We had an acceptable bid from the low bidder and were ready to go. Except for the federal delay in actual funding covered next.

2. Where does the money come from?

In recent years federal AIP project grants have been structured to provide 90% of the funds for eligible projects. The Idaho legislature & governor through the Idaho Transportation Department's Division of Aeronautics distributes matching funds that vary from year to year between about 2% and 5%. That all means that the remainder of the project cost (5% to 8%) must be covered by the City of Caldwell's taxpayers through the council and mayor as the airport sponsor (owner). The city plans for that "local match" and since the projects are forecast several years in advance, the expected matching funds are included in the airport budget.

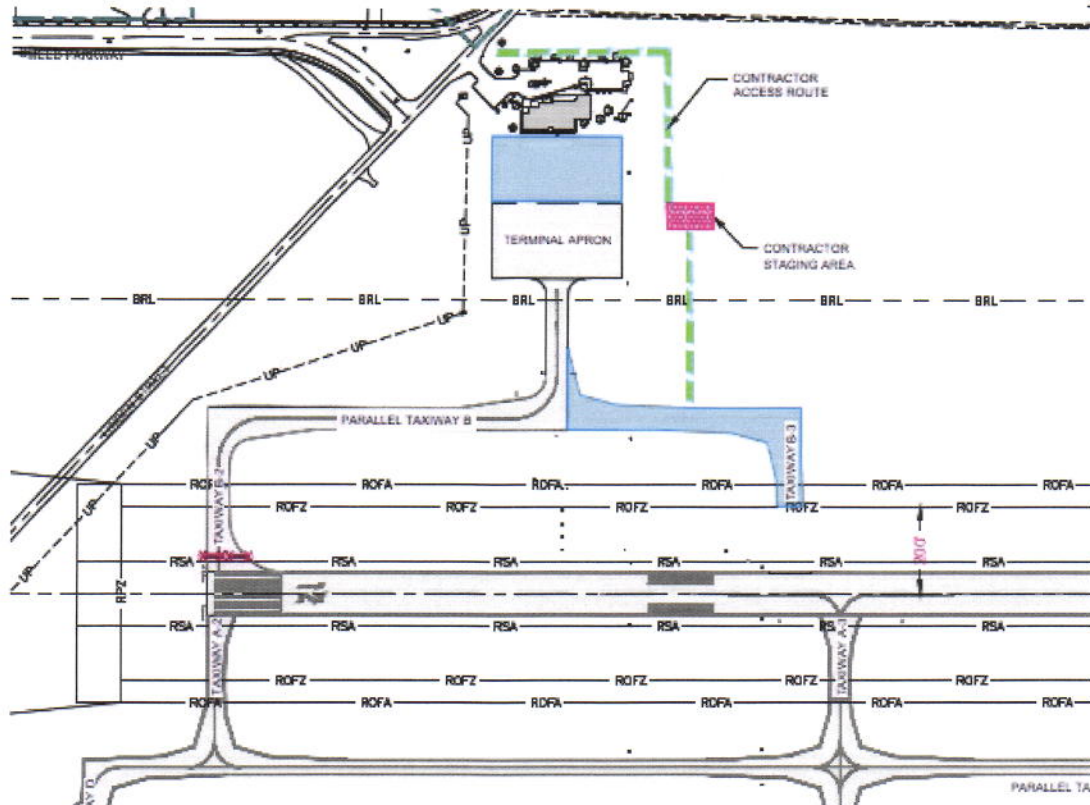
Even with everything "approved", we are not permitted to have the construction team start work on the construction contract until we actually have the grant funds made available to us in the federal payments system. This project was finally funded in mid-August. We gave the go-ahead to the contractor and work began on September 9 - a quick mobilization and kickoff, but still a fairly late start for an asphalt project since we will now be crowding the end of the summer construction window and risk a danger of not being able to complete our project as planned should the weather turn against us at a critical time. Given the slow pace of funding approval from Congress to the FAA to the FAA regional offices to the ADOs and then to EUL, we have launched this project just about as quickly as could be arranged given all the other players that had to act first.

3. What is happening now?

The contractor is a little over a week into Phase 1 that will include expanding the existing apron toward the HUBLER Terminal, adding another segment to Taxiway B, and adding the part of the B-3 connector outside the runway safety area. By closing (via NOTAMS) the B-2 connector, Taxiway B, and all the North Apron, all this work can be accomplished without compromising aviation safety. The entire airport - except the northside - remains fully operational. The work areas are

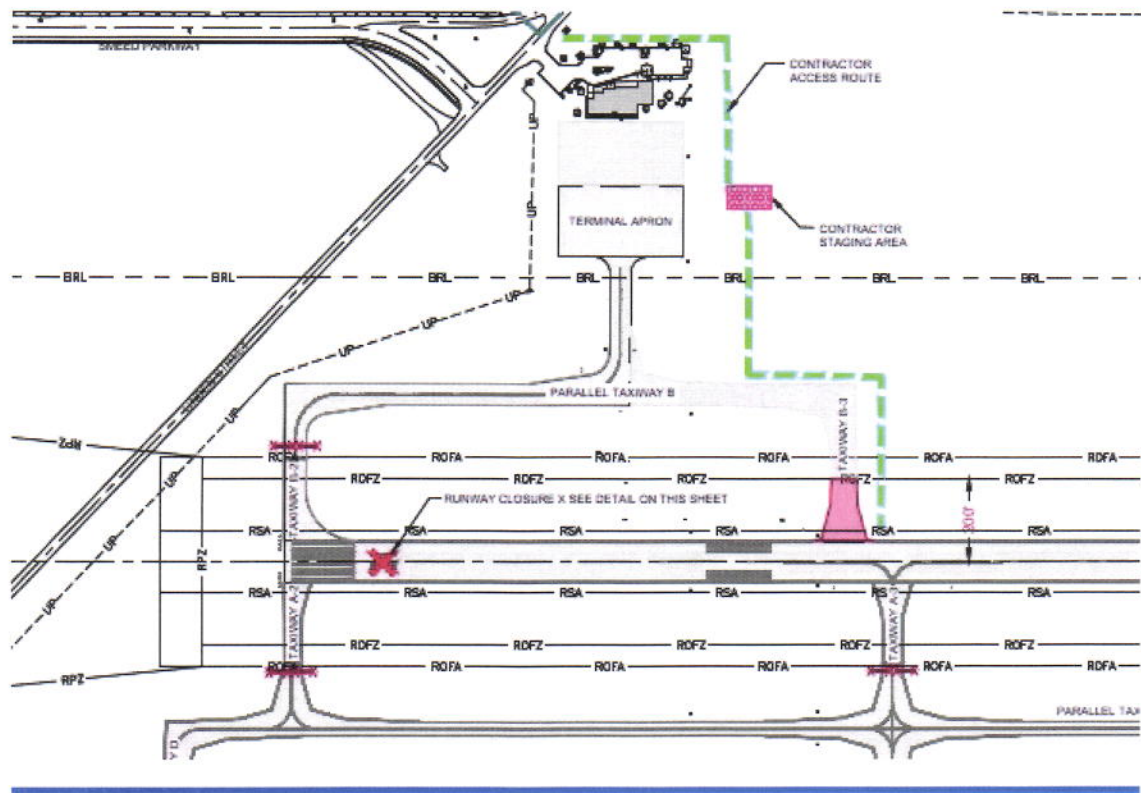
shaded in teal in the picture below.

Constructing new asphalt in a previously undisturbed area requires the removal of existing soil so that it can be replaced with a particular formula of base material required for FAA asphalt construction projects. The engineering idea is to give the asphalt on the top the best chance of long-term survival through all sorts of expected environmental and load conditions.



4. Why close the runway?

In the Phase 2 picture below you can see in red that B-3 will connect to the runway almost across from the A-3 connector – inside the runway touchdown area for Runway 12. The crew will be doing all the excavation, reloading base material, leveling, compacting, checking compaction, reworking taxiway, connector, and runway lighting, and finally placing asphalt to connect to the existing runway surface. Given the number of tasks involved, it will be very challenging for the contractor and their subcontractors to complete all that work in the six days allotted for it in the schedule. We are pushing the contractor to meet that tight time window. Should something go wrong beyond anyone's control we may have to step back, regroup, and plan a new deadline. Hopefully we will not need to do that.



We will close the runway via NOTAM to safely complete Phase 2. In a non-tower general aviation setting like EUL there is no way to safely keep the runway open while the work is in progress.

5. Why not use Taxiway A as a temporary runway?

If you've been at EUL a while you may recall that we did this in 2018 when our AIP project was a complete rehabilitation of our runway. Pressing Twy A into service as a runway is a non-trivial, expensive task. We did it then because the runway closure was set to take several months and our FAA engineering partners agreed to the additional time and additional cost to the project in order to offer our pilot community near-continuous take-off and landing access to our airport during that major rehab project.

Even with our best efforts to create a safe project work environment and do everything within reason to keep the airport operational as much as was humanly possible, on at least one occasion during the runway rehab project a pilot landed his single-engine piston aircraft directly over work crews onto the closed runway. He skipped checking the NOTAMs, skipped reading the newsletter, missed seeing the crews working ON THE RUNWAY, and flew right by the giant "X" on the ground denoting a CLOSED RUNWAY.

The conversion from Taxiway A into a Temporary Runway involves grinding off all the markings that make "A" a taxiway. Once those markings are all removed, the next step is to apply runway markings including the centerline, numbers, aiming bars, and hold lines – among other things. When we are done and the runway is ready to reopen, this entire process must be reversed to convert the temporary runway back into Taxiway A. It is an enormous effort, costs a lot of money, and directly and permanently impacts the surfaces and service life of Taxiway A. This is the longer explanation for my statement in the newsletter that the conversion is not justified for this short runway closure. In the life of our airport this planned closure is a small blip.

6. What if I must fly my fixed wing during the runway closure?

The best, most reliable approach to flying your fixed wing aircraft during the runway closure window is to reposition the aircraft temporarily to a nearby airport that remains open for regular operations. Nampa and Ontario have been popular locations for such temporary operations in the past. As repeatedly noted, this is a very short closure; plan for it.

7. Will there be restrictions for the helicopters?

In a word, no. Helicopters can launch/recover from Taxiway A or C or in a pinch, from other areas of the airport. Fixed wing pilots may find it somewhat distressing but try to maintain your perspective. The main flux of this project is to improve our facilities for fixed wing aircraft. Helicopters inherently have more flexibility in their take-offs and landings and can, therefore, make fuller use of the facility during a runway closure. While it is sometimes odd to restate the obvious, helicopters perform differently than fixed wing aircraft and we can't adjust physics to fit our desires. It also doesn't make much sense to NOTAM the entire airport closed when the work area and associated safety risks are so well defined and confined to the runway itself.

8. Why build this asphalt now?

When it comes to asphalt the FAA plays the long game. Airports like EUL are required to complete an Airport Master Plan that looks forward for the coming 20-year time period in the life of the airport. Such plans are usually updated every seven to 10 years. Expanding the apron near the Hubler Terminal and the B taxiway extension have been on our airport master plan for over 20 years. We have finally reached it as the next logical step in developing our airport. Over the course of years, we have made steady improvements to the facilities to support the overall growth of the airport.

I hope that this message helps fill in some gaps and may slow the spread of misinformation about our AIP project. Please share it with others who might benefit from this information.

Rob Oates
Airport Operations Manager



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