



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FAYETTE COUNTY AIRPORT RECEIVES STATE GRANT

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County's Joseph A. Hardy/Connellsville Airport will soon rehabilitate its weather reporting system, thanks to a \$75,000 state grant.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf announced Thursday that the airport was one of 26 facilities chosen to share more than \$6.2 million in funding from PennDOT's Aviation Development Program and Multimodal Fund.

The fund, which comes from the state's jet fuel tax, leverages \$2.1 million in local matches. All public-use airports statewide are eligible for the Aviation Development Program.

"With more than 400 airports across the state, this support from my administration helps keep aviation a viable transportation alternative and adds to our economy as well," Wolf said. "These airports support hundreds of thousands of jobs and offer services that are attractive to the business community and others interested in general aviation."

The grants will allow recipients to make infrastructure and equipment upgrades to maintain safety and expand aviation-related operational and economic opportunities in their respective counties.

Joseph A. Hardy/Connellsville Airport Manager Bud Neckerauer said the grant will be used to replace the weather reporting system, which pilots use to track winds, ceilings and other data prior to landings and takeoffs.

"The system's been breaking down for a while now and it's been on our master plan to be updated," Neckerauer said. "It's hard to find parts for it and we've had a few problems."

"The system can actually turn aircraft away if it's not functioning properly, so it's great that the state offers that program."

The airport, Neckerauer said, currently boasts more than 60 tenants and facilities usage is up about 800 percent from 2011. The updated system will enhance all airport users' overall experience, he added.

"Any time there's an update to this kind of stuff, it makes things better, so this was something I was really asking the Bureau of Aviation to push forward during our planning meeting in September," he said.

Fayette County-based state Sen. Pat Stefano, R-Bullskin Township, applauded the grant and said airports are "key parts of our regional economy" and "certainly will take on an even larger role in the future."

"These grants continue the state's investment in our community," Stefano said. "By developing and enhancing our local airports, we give local leaders another great marketing tool to use when competing for new businesses and jobs."

Neckerauer said the airport continues to grow and succeed, thanks in large part to support from Fayette County Commissioners Vince Vicites, Dave Lohr and Angela Zimmerlink.

Chairman Vicites said, if the airport continues to grow, it will become more financially stable with the ability to generate more revenue on its own.

"The airport can help us in the future for economic development," Vicites said. "If we're able to enhance it, we will be able to land larger aircraft and attract more businesses to Fayette County that need that type of service."

"I am thankful that Fayette County is a recipient of this \$75,000 grant, funded in part by the state's jet fuel tax, which will be used for equipment upgrades to ensure safety during flight operations," Zimmerlink said.

Work on the weather reporting system is expected to begin as soon as possible.

"We're very happy about this, because it's been a problem," Neckerauer said. "We get calls from pilots and we try to do what we can, but this is a big deal for the airport."

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Journalist, at 724-317-6924, kmoore@fayettecountypa.info.