

As demand grows, RDU will present plan to add gates to Terminal 1 in April

News and Observer By Richard Stradling January 27, 2020

MORRISVILLE – Raleigh-Durham International Airport is working on plans to expand Terminal 1, and planners expect to present a proposal to the airport’s governing board in April.

The airport is considering adding as many as 15 gates to the terminal to keep up with passenger growth, but the exact number is not settled yet, said Bill Sandifer, RDU’s chief operating officer. If the Airport Authority approves the concept in April, it would take at least two years for designs and permits and another three years of construction before the new gates are open, Sandifer said.

RDU is considering options of adding seven, 12 or 15 gates to Terminal 1, which will have nine later this spring. The lower two numbers could be built without significant changes to the road and drop-off zone in front of the terminal and would cost as much as \$500 million.

“We need to expand Terminal 1,” Sandifer said. “The only question is how many gates.”

It’s not clear which airlines would leave Terminal 2, the airport’s main terminal with 36 gates, to occupy the new slots in Terminal 1. Sandifer said airport staff will meet with airlines in coming months to talk about the airport’s expansion plans and how they might fit in.

Two airlines, Allegiant and Spirit, will move to Terminal 1 in April when RDU reopens four gates that were mothballed after Terminal 2 opened in 2008. Frontier Airlines is expected to follow at a later date. The reopened gates, added to the five used by Southwest Airlines, would bring the total number of gates in Terminal 1 to nine.

GROWTH OUTPACES PREDICTIONS

A development plan for the airport approved four years ago, known as Vision 2040, envisions expansion to begin in Terminal 2 on the west side of the airport. Since then, passenger growth has far outstripped expectations; more than 14.2 million travelers passed through RDU last year, a number the airport didn’t expect to reach until 2031 under Vision 2040.

To make room for added gates in Terminal 2, RDU must build a new runway west of the current one, which would then be converted into a taxiway. It will take until at least 2025 for that runway to open, Sandifer said, and building additional gates would take at least another three years.

“So we’re nine years out, and we’re still growing,” he said.

Adding gates to Terminal 1 has already drawn opposition from The Umstead Coalition, a collection of nonprofits that works to promote and protect William B. Umstead State Park, which borders RDU to the east. The coalition’s leader, Jean Spooner, sent a letter to RDU Airport Authority members Friday urging them not to expand Terminal 1.

“These actions, if approved, would SUBSTANTIALLY increase air traffic impacts to William B. Umstead State Park,” Spooner wrote. “The result would be substantial negative impacts to Umstead State Park.”

Spoooner said RDU should follow the recommendations of a task force formed by the Regional Transportation Alliance, a business group, that suggested the airport consider creating a new third terminal, north of Terminal 2, on the west side of the airport, “away from Umstead State Park.”

Sandifer told members of the Airport Authority on Monday that a new terminal would likely cost \$1 billion. He added that if the airport wanted to build a new terminal that the location suggested by the task force might not be the best place for it. (CONTINUED...)

RDU TO EXPAND SECURITY CHECKPOINT

The Airport Authority approved a contract to build two more security lanes in Terminal 2, which would bring the total there to 14 by late summer. They will go into a space that until recently was occupied by the Panopolis sandwich shop and some offices used by the Transportation Security Administration.

RDU also opened two new lanes last May, bringing the total to 12, to try to relieve long lines of passengers waiting to be screened by the TSA. Those lines can snake around the ticketing hall of Terminal 2 before 8 a.m., when about a fourth of all scheduled departures from RDU take off.

The security lanes that opened last year were built in unused space behind a wall adjacent to the checkpoint and cost about \$2.5 million. Adding two new lanes next to those means reconfiguring behind-the-scenes office space in Terminal 2 to make up for the lost TSA offices, so the work is expected to cost closer to \$6 million.

It will cost \$4 billion to modernize and expand RDU; it has only about half that much

News and Observer By Richard Stradling January 18, 2020

CARY – When [Raleigh-Durham International Airport](#) approved a long-term plan for growth in late 2016, it projected the number of passengers passing through the terminals would increase to about 14.2 million a year by 2031.

Instead, a hot local economy and the arrival of several low-cost carriers has swelled the number of air travelers in the region, so that RDU has already surpassed that number 12 years sooner than expected. To keep up, RDU has plans to refurbish and expand the airport, including additional gates, a new main runway and a new rental car facility within walking distance of the terminals.

It's not clear yet how it will all be paid for, which is why the business community agreed, at the airport's request, to form a task force to develop ideas. The [Regional Transportation Alliance](#), a program of the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, [released a first draft of the task force's work](#) on Friday that includes proposed higher fees for passengers and airlines and larger contributions from local governments.

"There are going to be things here that everybody's going to like, and there'll be some things everybody's going to dislike," Joe Milazzo, the alliance's executive director, told a gathering of business and government representatives. "The task force goal is to get your attention, highlight the issue and propose a series of options while avoiding an excessive burden on any one group of stakeholders in our market."

[The airport's master plan](#), called Vision 2040, called for about \$2.7 billion worth of construction; the pace of growth has increased that number to nearly \$4 billion, airport officials say. Most of the money will come from state and federal grants and income generated by the airport from such sources as parking, rent in the terminals and passenger fees.

RDU president Michael Landguth says the airport has enough cash and credit to cover its building plans over the next decade. But beyond that remains unclear, resulting in a potential shortfall of \$1 billion to \$2 billion.

Landguth said he and other airport officials want to study the task force's recommendations before identifying the most promising ones. But he said having the business group making RDU's development a priority will help.
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“The engagement with them and this entire community is what’s important right now,” Landguth said. “I can’t be the only one carrying the conversation to Washington, D.C. It’s got to be a broader conversation and a broader audience that’s got to be part of that overall solution.”

NEW FEES AMONG TASK FORCE’S IDEAS

One of the task force’s recommendations is to push for increasing the passenger facility charge on each airline ticket by \$1, to \$5.50. That charge is set by Congress, which has capped it at \$4.50 and isn’t inclined to raise it in the face of strong opposition from airlines.

Other potential changes recommended by the 12-member task force are within the control of the airport and local governments. They include:

- Increase landing fees paid by airlines and establishing a new landing fee for general aviation flights.
- Charge a \$2 access fee for cars and trucks visiting the RDU campus.
- Persuade the four local governments that own RDU — Raleigh, Durham and Durham and Wake counties — to contribute more to the airport. Each government currently pays \$12,500 a year to RDU.
- Reallocate the local share of rental car taxes to the airport. The part of those taxes that don’t go to state government are now used to support mass transit and, to a lesser extent, the general fund of county government.
- Consider building a new terminal north of Terminal 2 and getting airlines to pay for it.
- Revisit the airport’s Vision 2040 master plan “given the reality of an adjacent, beloved state park.” The master plan called for allowing a quarry or some other industrial use on 105 acres of airport land next to [William B. Umstead State Park](#), causing an uproar that [has landed in court](#).

The task force was divided over whether the quarry is a good idea. Under the lease [approved by the Airport Authority](#) last March, Wake Stone Corp. is expected to pay RDU \$20 million to \$25 million, mostly in royalty payments, over the next 25 to 35 years.

But that amounts to less than 2% of the projected gap, and it comes at a price to RDU, the task force wrote.

“The controversy over the quarry has clearly created a distraction, consuming valuable staff and board time, energy, focus, and political capital,” it wrote. “And this issue has thus far been a lost opportunity to have a needed conversation with the region about the sheer magnitude of the funding gap facing the airport — that gap will be \$1 (billion) to \$2 billion, whether or not the quarry moves forward.”

RDU’s development plan calls for building a new 11,500-foot runway capable of handling flights to Asia by 2025, and then adding new gates to Terminal 2 by building extensions, or piers, off the existing building. In the meantime, the airport is also considering adding as many as a dozen more gates to Terminal 1, along with the new baggage, ticketing and security screening areas needed in a bigger terminal.

The Regional Transportation Alliance’s RDU report can be found at www.letsgetmoving.org/RDU/AID.

There's no driver for the newest shuttle coming to NC State's campus

Herald-Sun By Richard Stradling January 9, 2020

RALEIGH – A pilotless flying taxi from China began this week's 2020 Transportation Summit in Raleigh, but it was the second autonomous vehicle featured at the event that North Carolinians will get to ride first.

A boxy, driverless vehicle will begin making a regular loop around N.C. State University's Centennial Campus starting next month. The electric-powered shuttle, called CASSI, is capable of carrying up to 12 people on pre-programmed routes.

The N.C. Department of Transportation is leasing the shuttle, a model EZ 10 from EasyMile, a French company that is one of several developing vehicles that use cameras, radar, GPS and laser sensors to steer on their own. These kinds of vehicles are coming, said Hannah Cockburn, director of NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division, and CASSI will help people experience the technology and start thinking about how it might be used in their communities.

"If we want to be prepared for the future, this is a great, accessible way to begin that conversation," Cockburn said.

CASSI will loop through the heart of Centennial Campus on weekdays and during special events on weekends, said Mike Kennon, the assistant director of transportation at NCSU. Kennon said the campus, home to NC State's engineering school and several technology companies, is an ideal place to showcase a futuristic form of transportation.

"The whole premise of the project is to give the students and residents of the area a chance to see the technology, see that it works and build a comfort level with it," he said.

LIKE A MINI SUBWAY CAR

The EZ 10 looks like a mini subway car on rubber tires, with seats for six, straps hanging from the ceiling and side double-doors that part to let passengers on and off. There's no steering wheel or seat for a driver. Those attending NCDOT's Transportation Summit were able to take short trips in CASSI from the basement of the Raleigh Convention Center out into the Red Hat Amphitheater and back.

CASSI, which stands for Connected Autonomous Shuttle Supporting Innovation, has a top speed of 12 miles per hour. It slows down for changes in the pavement, such as raised crosswalks or the dip at a storm drain at the entrance to the convention center. And it stops — suddenly — when something unexpected gets in its way.

Dionysi Damaskopoulos, an engineer for EasyMile, was on board to make sure everything went OK during the runs this week, but he wasn't driving. He warned passengers to hang on.

"This vehicle may drive slow," Damaskopoulos told them, "but it stops very quickly."

As if to illustrate his point, CASSI made a sudden stop on one trip through the amphitheater Wednesday evening that threw standing riders forward into each other. It wasn't immediately clear what caused it, but Damaskopoulos said the sensors are sensitive.

"We've literally had stops for tumbleweeds," he said.

Yahnay Baptiste, who works in NCDOT's Office of Civil Rights, described the ride as "nice and smooth," despite the sudden stop.

"It's very aware of its surroundings. Very aware," Baptiste said. "But I loved it. I can't wait to see the future generations of it." (CONTINUED...)

TECHNOLOGY WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE

This is EasyMile's third version of the EZ 10, and Cockburn said the technology will only get better, which is one reason NCDOT is leasing rather than buying. The budget for the project is \$500,000, covering the lease, signs along the route and paid attendants who will ride along to answer questions and handle problems.

The state initially planned to use a shuttle called Olli, made by an American firm, Local Motors, but Cockburn said the Olli hasn't received waivers from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration that would allow it to drive on public streets.

Without the waiver, EZ 10 wouldn't meet NHTSA standards for low-speed vehicles, Cockburn said. Among other things, it's too heavy, she said.

"The rules established for low-speed vehicles didn't contemplate a vehicle like this," she said.

Neither does state law, which would require a vehicle like this to have rear-view mirrors, even though there's no driver to use them.

NCDOT has leased CASSI for one year. It will operate at Centennial Campus for six months, and the department will look for two or three other places where it can be used the rest of the year. Cockburn said good candidates include college campuses, business parks and small downtown areas.