A Message to Our Community

I hope this newsletter reaches all of you safe and well. Over the past five months, the aviation industry has been in a constant state of change as airlines and airports respond to reduced travel demand due to the novel coronavirus. Airline schedule changes have been frequent and at times unpredictable both at Willard Airport and at the majority of airports across the United States. In the month of April, passenger enplanements at Willard Airport dropped over 90% when compared to 2019, as stay-at-home orders went into effect in Illinois. In the months after, some demand has returned for air travel, however, Willard is still only emplaning approximately 25% of the normal volume of passengers on a daily basis. Impacts include the temporary closing of Einstein Bagels in the passenger boarding terminal, and also a suspension of operations for Hertz Car Rental at Willard. While these are difficult times for Willard Airport, we remain optimistic that there are better times ahead. Airline schedule volatility is likely in the future, please be aware of this if you plan to book travel.

Despite the numerous challenges 2020 has presented so far, Willard has been busy with numerous FAA and IDOT sponsored construction projects on our roadways and the airfield. The airport entrance roadway project is substantially complete, resulting in a better experience traveling to and from the airport. Also, two airfield projects are active and ongoing; Construct Taxiway A5, and Rehabilitate Taxiway Lighting & Signage. Overall, $5 Million in projects will be completed in 2020 at the Airport.

I want to thank all of Willard Airport staff that have been dedicated to keeping the airport fully operational during the pandemic, especially our essential staff members who reported to work when most others stayed home. This shows unwavering dedication to the operation of our airport, a true testament to our excellent staff that report to work daily to keep the airport clean, safe, and secure for our customers.
**Airport Entrance Road Rehab Complete**

It's smooth sailing onto airport roads these days! The entrance road rehab was completed this summer. New striping and roadway painting was also completed in numerous spots around the airport giving it a fresh new look.

**Taxiway Lighting and Signage Repair**

A taxiway lighting and signage project is underway that will consist of repairing wiring and lighting as well as installing new and improved lights and signs. The new LED lights will be safer and more efficient than the aged lights and wires being replaced.

The total project costs $1.3M and is funded primarily by the FAA and IDOT with Willard contributing five percent.

**Reconstruction of Taxiway A5**

The geometry at Taxiway A5 is being corrected to adhere to FAA geometry standards.

The project consists of removing pavement currently in place and laying new pavement in compliance with the Airfield Geometry Project.

Of the $3.2M project, the FAA and IDOT are contributing 90 percent and five percent, respectively. Leaving five percent to be covered by Willard.
**CARES Act Funding**

Willard Airport will receive $1,838,071 in CARES Act funding for airport capital expenditures, airport operating expenses, and airport debt payments. The CARES Act Airport Grant Program is intended to offset the loss of revenue due to COVID-19.

“We are very happy the CARES Act is providing critical relief to the University of Illinois-Willard Airport, as this funding will be used for operating expenses such as staff salaries, maintenance, safety, security, and other necessary expenditures to keep the airport fully operational during the pandemic,” said Bannon. “Operating revenues such as airport parking, concessions, and commissions have been reduced significantly, due to reduced demand for air travel. We look forward to a full recovery, in the meantime, this critical federal funding will allow us to remain fully operational.”

**Charging Stations Installed in Departure Lounge**

Frequent travelers of Willard Airport might notice some updates around the terminal. Charging stations have been installed throughout the departure lounge as well as new exterior signage around the airport. The charging stations will allow for easier access to power sources so travelers can easily charge their devices. We value our travelers and are always looking for ways to improve our facilities and services.
Due to low demand for rental cars, Hertz Car Rental has temporarily suspended their operations at Willard. They plan to reopen operations in the future, date still to be determined.

Across the United States, Willard is experiencing changes to the flight schedules due to a low demand for travel. Unfortunately, these changes come from American Airlines and can happen at anytime with little to no notice.

Most recently, American Airline temporarily suspended flights to Dallas Fort-Worth (DFW) and O'Hare International Airport (ORD) through the end of September, 2020. In the meantime, CMI will have one round-trip flight per day to Charlotte International Airport (CLT).

Einstein Bros. Bagels has been closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and will stay closed for the time being. Once flights stabilize and passenger volume improves, the bagel company will reevaluate their return to Willard.