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NRV Airport to get \$5 million upgrade

Plans include resurfacing the runway, adding lights, leveling a buffer zone and redesigning a turnoff to accommodate a taxiway extension.

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DUBLIN -- Business and cargo planes that land and take off at New River Valley Airport will soon no longer have to use a rutted runway, because the airstrip is getting a fresh coat of asphalt.

Rifenburg Construction of Durham, N.C., will begin repairs Sunday under a \$5 million contract, officials announced Wednesday.

The runway, which has not been completely resurfaced for 20 years, is cracked and sprouting weeds that crews must clip with a lawn mower.

In addition to giving the 6,201-foot runway a new surface, crews will add lights, level a buffer zone and redesign a turnoff to accommodate a future taxiway extension.

"We're ready to get rolling," said Keith Holt, airport manager, who estimated the project will take 40 days unless delayed by weather.

The airport will be closed sporadically during construction.

At the airport Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Abingdon, outlined his efforts to line up aviation fuel-tax receipts that will cover 94 percent of the project's cost. The state will supply nearly \$150,000 and local governments will supply the rest.

Activity at the general aviation airport is on the rise. Officials said 127 business-related aircraft landed during the first six months of this year, compared with 102 during the same period last year.

June was an exceptionally busy month, with 51 landings of business aircraft. The planes were carrying a total of 108 people and 146,382 pounds of cargo, an airport report said.

Though it was built for passenger travel in 1962, the airport no longer offers scheduled flights. It is geared to business-related travel and freight aboard chartered or privately owned aircraft and belongs to a commission made up of Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties, the city of Radford and the towns of Christiansburg, Dublin and Pulaski.

Commissioners are planning how to celebrate the airport's 50th birthday next summer -- possibly with an air show.

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