

News Release



DETROIT METRO • WILLOW RUN
WAYNE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

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Detroit Metro Airport to Begin Critical Runway Rehabilitation Project

--Noise and air traffic patterns will shift temporarily

Next week, Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) will begin critical rehabilitation work on its second-longest runway (3R/21L), resulting in a temporary change in air traffic flow arriving and departing the airport.

“This project has been widely publicized already,” said Wayne County Airport Authority CEO Lester Robinson. “However, we want everyone to know that we have now received authorization from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to begin. The project starts Monday, May 14, and is scheduled to be completed in mid-November. When it’s complete, the FAA will return to normal air traffic control procedures.”

The purpose of the rehabilitation project is to extend the useful life of the runway – a critical piece of the Detroit region’s transportation infrastructure – by at least another 20 years. During construction, aircraft operations usually assigned to the closed runway will be reassigned to one of DTW’s other three parallel runways. At peak times, it is anticipated that Runway 9R/27L, one of the airport’s crosswind runways, will also be used for arrivals and departures as weather conditions permit.

During this construction period, communities immediately north and east of the airport may experience a temporary increase in air traffic noise.

“The Airport Authority recognizes that this critical runway rehabilitation project will result in some temporary inconvenience for some of our neighbors,” said Robinson. “We’ve been working closely with leaders from all of our neighboring communities who recognize the importance of this project for the long-term viability of our region.”

Runway 3R/21L was originally constructed in 1976 and has required extensive maintenance and patching over the past 10 years. DTW estimates that the runway would need to be closed as frequently as 30 days and 60 nights in 2007 if not for the rehabilitation project, resulting in more unpredictable shifts in aircraft noise for neighboring communities.

Because of DTW’s extensive runway system, the temporary closure of Runway 3R/21L is not expected to affect airport capacity during the busy summer travel season.

“Travelers should not expect additional delays as a result of the runway rehabilitation project,” Robinson said.

The project consists of the demolition, removal and full-depth replacement of the pavement section for the northern-most 7,600 feet of the 150 feet wide Runway 3R-21L. The blast pad on each end of the runway and the portion of adjacent stub taxiways within the runway safety area will also be replaced, and runway shoulders, lighting, and drainage will be improved. A similar rehabilitation effort occurred on the most-south 2,400 feet of Runway 3R-21L in 2006.

Once the rehabilitation project is complete, Runway 3R/21L will return to its current operation. The reconstructed runway will not be lengthened or widened, so its ability to handle take-offs and landings will not change.

DTW has a total of six runways, making it among the most operationally-capable commercial airports in North America. The Airport Authority is continually revising its Airport Master Plan to ensure DTW continues to meet the rapidly developing transportation needs of Southeast Michigan.

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