

Paine Field lands \$11.3 million in stimulus money

By [Bill Sheets](#)

Herald Writer

EVERETT -- Paine Field's planned makeover of its main runway and taxiway will get a head start, thanks to \$11.3 million in federal economic stimulus money and the promise of a few million more.

The airport, owned and operated by Snohomish County, is one of only four airports in Washington state to receive money from the federal stimulus package, and one of about 50 nationwide.

"It puts the needed projects that are important for the county and for Boeing ahead of schedule," County Executive Aaron Reardon said.

The county also is getting quite a bit more than any of the others in the state. Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake is set to receive \$2 million; Pangborn Memorial Airport in Wenatchee is getting \$1 million; and Bellingham International Airport is receiving \$800,000 -- each for runway repaving.

The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport applied for funding for several projects, including rehab of the older two of its three runways, Port of Seattle spokeswoman Terri-Ann Betancourt said. One of the projects, a \$51.6 million rehab of the east runway, had already been assigned to a contractor and therefore was not eligible for stimulus funds, she said. Plans for the other runway were not shovel-ready, she said.

The Federal Aviation Administration weighed the projects according to a long list of factors, including whether the projects have received the necessary permits and can get up and running quickly, according to Laura Brown, a spokeswoman for the FAA in Washington, D.C.

The FAA has told Snohomish County that in addition to the original \$11.3 million grant, it will get between \$4 million and \$6 million more for the runway and taxiway.

"This is the highest-priority project at the airport for the county, the FAA and Boeing," county spokesman Christopher Schwarzen said. "The pavement on the taxiway and runway is at the end of its useful life and needs to be redone."

The taxiway was last repaved in two phases between 1984 and 1989, and the runway was last done in three phases between 1994 and 2000, airport director Dave Waggoner said.

The total project is expected to cost \$17 million. The county believes it can now start and finish the work before the end of this year, Schwarzen said.

Otherwise, "we would have done the work in phases over the course of several years," he said.

The main runway will be closed for several three- to five-day periods this summer during construction, Waggoner said. The airport's other two runways, which are suitable for smaller planes but not Boeing aircraft, will remain open during construction.

Paine Field is currently used primarily by Boeing, private aircraft and some military and diplomatic flights. Two airlines, Horizon Air of Seattle and Allegiant Air of Las Vegas, have expressed interest in operating commercial flights out of the airport. The county has been talking with the two airlines but no decision has been made on when service could begin.

The county asked for a total of \$70.4 million from the economic stimulus package for eight different projects at Paine Field, including the runway repaving.

Other projects included \$1.7 million for an access road on the west side of the airport; \$500,000 for a de-icing facility; \$600,000 for a snowplow and \$900,000 for a fire engine.

The county is still on the lookout for funds for these and other projects, Schwarzen said. It also needs \$7 million for a new taxiway on the west side of the airport, \$7 million for

renovation of hangars and parking for smaller planes, and \$5 million for repaving of the smaller runway on the east side of the airport.

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