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Katrina - a 360 degree
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Thursday, October 28, 2004

Airport's economic impact increases

By Bill Gisel

AUBURN — The DeKalb County Airport has an annual economic impact of nearly \$17 million, according to an Aviation Association of Indiana report.

Airport manager Russ Couchman announced the results of the economic impact study conducted by the Aviation Association of Indiana, which is conducted every two years.

“The study shows another increase in local economic benefit,” Couchman said. “In 1999 the DeKalb County Airport’s annual economic impact was \$7.8 million; in 2001 it was \$10.3 million,” he reported.

The study looks at direct results such as payroll, operating expenditures and capital improvements, and at indirect results including money spent away from the airport at hotels, restaurants and other retail establishments. It includes induced benefits, which consist of spending and respending of money within the community, Couchman explained.

The airport’s \$200,000 annual operating budget is partially funded by fuel flowage fees, land leases and hangar rentals. The county supports the airport with semi-annual capital improvement bond payments of some \$225,000.

“The majority of the capital improvement projects are funded through federal and state grants,” Couchman noted. “The total annual expenses compared to the annual economic impact to the community shows a 25 to 1 return on the county’s investment,” he said.

“The airport is well-poised to keep up with the demands of the local community,” said Layden Rieke, aviation board president.

The airport expects to commission an automated weather observation station and instrument landing system this year.

“These two improvements allow properly equipped aircraft to continue to use the airport when weather conditions deteriorate,” Couchman said.



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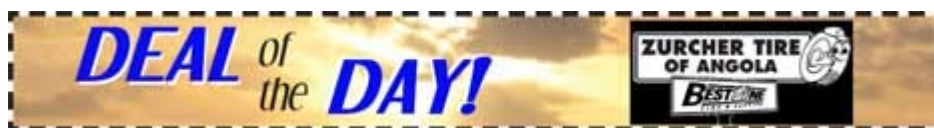
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