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Citrus County enters new era of aviation at its two airports

Citrus County is closing in on some major projects in its current plans for a new aviation future. It has finished or is in the last stages of major upgrades and expansions at its two airports, and local officials are excited about the potential those improvements will afford for the future of the businesses community.

Currently the Crystal River Airport has an economic impact of \$9.6 million, with 115 related jobs that generate a \$3 million payroll. Inverness Airport has a \$2.6 million impact with 25 related jobs generating a \$759,900 payroll.

The major goals of Citrus County's Aviation Master Plans are closer to being realized as one airport runway, at Inverness, is currently being extended to 5,000 feet, the magic number for small corporate jets.

The ultimate goal is to take the Crystal River Airport to 5,000 feet, starting in 2012. It is currently 4,555 feet. The taxiway was recently widened and moved for increased separation from the runway to service B-2 type aircraft (corporate jets, for example).

The commission also recently approved a supplement to amend an existing grant to upgrade existing navigation aids at the airport to enhance safety.

Also at Crystal River, the county commission recently approved a contract for the design for an estimated 25 new T-hangars.

In Inverness, work is ongoing to significantly upgrade the airport. In addition to the runway being realigned and extended to 5,000 feet, all new airfield lighting with a backup generator is being installed, a Jet-A fuel tank has been installed, and an automated weather observation system has been put into service.

The new Fixed Base Operator (FBO) terminal/maintenance hangar and apron design for Inverness is almost complete, and construction will soon be underway on the terminal at the south end of the airport. To accommodate the upgrades, Watson Street, off U.S. 41, has been extended to the terminal area.

In addition to that, the Citrus County Economic Development Council (EDC), with support from the county commission, is readying property along the road near the terminal that will soon be developed as a business park.

Citrus EDC president John Siefert said Citrus County has now become much more aviation friendly, and said, "We expect our new capabilities to make a difference in how companies that utilize aviation view doing business here and basing operations here."

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