

Airport undergoing \$32.8M facelift

Various phases of work should last about 3 years

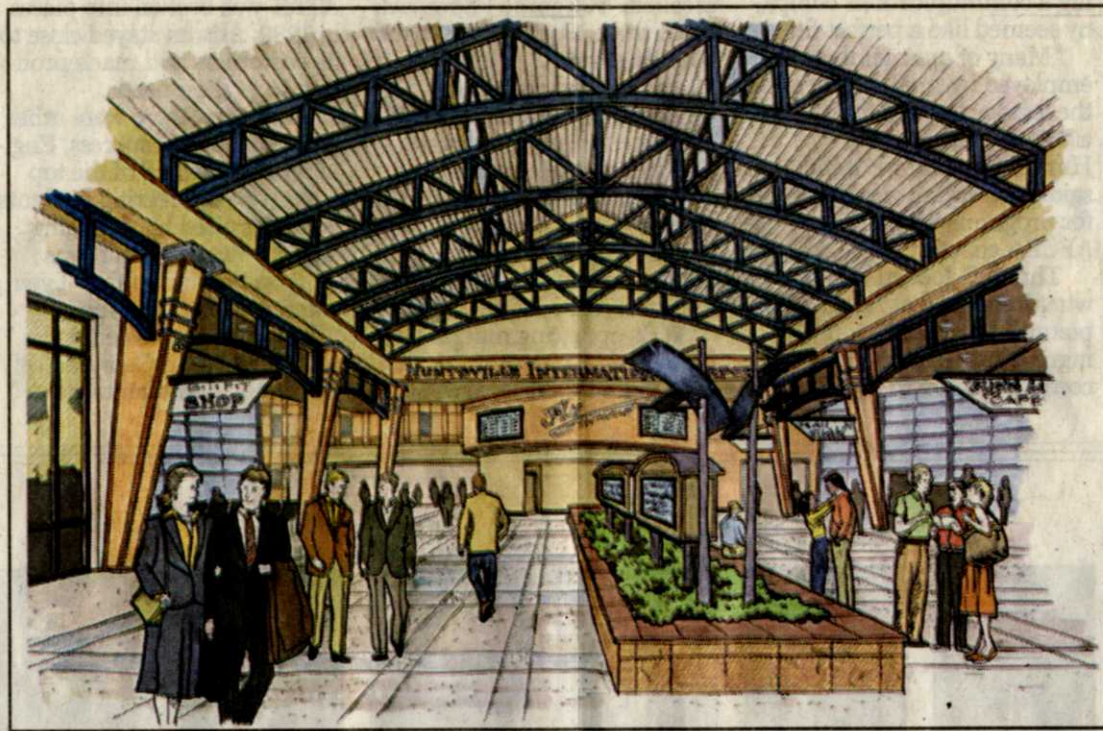
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The concourse, concession and baggage claim areas at Huntsville International Airport are about to get a new look in a \$32.8 million improvement project.

Rick Tucker, the airport's executive director, said the program will make the airport even more convenient for travelers and the public. "We're excited about this program for the future," he said. "For the next three years, there will be one phase of construction after another."

The first phase of the concourse work will be completed this month, said Mike Chapman of Chapman Sisson Architects, the architect firm for the project. That phase includes converting Gates 1 and 2 in the concourse to dual gates and installing new finishes like carpeting and ceiling tiles.

The second-floor connector bridge between the terminal building and the concourse, now 7,500 square feet, will be expanded to 27,500 square feet



A artist's rendering shows the second-floor terminal expansion at Huntsville International Airport.

to provide more public waiting space and more space for security checkpoint queuing, said Chapman. Airport visitors will be able to look out at airplanes on the tarmac.

Construction is expected to start late next spring, Chapman said, and is to be finished in the

fall of 2007.

The baggage claim area on the terminal building's first floor will be expanded to the east and two new baggage carousel systems added. Construction will start there in fall 2007 and be completed the following fall, Chapman said.

Construction work to expand the concessions area in the concourse to 6,500 square feet should start next fall, Chapman said, and be completed in the late spring of 2007.

About 50 new flat-screen

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flight information displays will be installed throughout the airport starting in January; that work will be finished by late next summer.

Airport spokeswoman Cindy Maloney said construction work is being done in phases to have the least impact on passengers. For example, construction will take place on both sides of the connector bridge and passengers will be diverted to those portions, then the existing bridge will be demolished and work will move to that section.

The airport improvement project will use \$26.3 million in federal entitlement funds,

money that's granted to airports based on passenger traffic; \$4.3 million from passenger facility charges from airline tickets and \$2.2 million from the airport's capital improvement funds.

Other work

In addition to the terminal and concourse work, airport officials plan to issue \$18.3 million in airport revenue bonds in January as part of the funding for a proposed \$25.7 million parking deck expansion to the east.

The project will add 1,300 spaces to the existing 1,600-space deck, said Luther "Butch" Roberts, the airport's deputy director. Construction should start next August, Roberts said, and take about 14 months to finish.