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Gov. Beshear Cuts Ribbon at Gallatin County Regional Airport, Boosts Economy, Emergency Services and Tourism in Northern Kentucky

State provided \$18 million to support Kentucky's 58th General Aviation airport, filling aviation gap between Louisville and Cincinnati

SANDERS, Ky. (June 28, 2023) – Gov. Andy Beshear accompanied federal, state and local officials for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Kentucky's newest and 58th General Aviation airport, the Gallatin County Regional Airport in Sparta.

The airport closes a logistical gap for aircraft users in the area while boosting economic development, emergency services and tourism in the region.

"This is an amazing milestone for Gallatin County and Northern Kentucky, more than 20 years in the making. Today, we showed everyone that when we work together as Team Kentucky, we get big things done," **Gov. Beshear** said. "This airport is going to support our booming economy, promote tourism in this region and provide a new site for emergency responders."

The Gallatin County Regional Airport will be the first general aviation airport to serve the I-71 corridor between Louisville and Cincinnati. The non-commercial airport features a 5,000-foot by 75-foot concrete runway with a full parallel taxiway and apron. The \$44 million project received \$18 million in state funding, \$25.5 million in federal funding and \$55,500 from the county.

The airport is near the Kentucky Speedway, home to motorsports racing and events, and is expected to boost economic development in this growing region by offering a convenient location to land and take off. In attendance at the ribbon-cutting were local executives from Nucor Steel Gallatin, who plan to

use the airport for corporate travel to their nearby mill used to produce sheet steel for automotive, appliance, construction, pipe and other industrial and consumer products.

The Governor said he also expects the new airport to host future flight-training and aviation maintenance classes in partnership with community colleges. This will assist in statewide efforts to address the nationwide pilot and aircraft mechanic shortages.

Department of Aviation Commissioner Mark Carter credits federal, state and local official collaboration to complete this long-awaited project that has stretched more than 20 years. More enhancements are planned at the airport, including a state-funded terminal building and fuel system that will open in 2024.

“Today’s opening of the Gallatin County Regional Airport represents the culmination of nearly two decades of work from Gallatin County leaders, consultants, contractors and the Kentucky Department of Aviation. We are thrilled to be a part of this historic effort to see the project through to the finish line,” said Commissioner Carter.

Gallatin County Regional Airport is expected to be a home base airport for over 20 aircraft and host approximately 13,000 takeoffs annually. The airport will be funded using revenue from jet fuel sales, hangar rental fees and fuel excise tax returns, among other federal, local and state project funds.

The airport is managed by the Gallatin County Regional Airport Board of Directors. **Gallatin County Judge/Executive Ryan Morris** currently serves as the airport manager handling day-to-day operations, like closure alerts to pilots and routine communications with the Federal Aviation Administration.

“I’m beyond excited to see planes finally land in Gallatin County,” said Judge Morris. “Our county supports four major modes of transportation: rail, roadways, waterways and now aviation. The sky is the limit regarding the opportunities this opens up for our region, and we’re proud to offer travelers more ways to get to Gallatin County.”

“With half of Nucor’s steel across all of its mills going into the non-residential construction market, we know firsthand the value of infrastructure projects like this general aviation airport opening today,” said **Greg Mitchell of Nucor Steel Gallatin**. “Not only are we incredibly excited to start utilizing this facility to help our business, but we cannot wait to see the impact it will have on the economy of this region.”

The Kentucky Aviation Association (KAA), a nonprofit that promotes aviation facilities, safety, education and business in Kentucky, congratulated the state on the latest airport, which not only meets business needs but supports the future aviation workforce.

“Kentucky is a multi-modal state, and investing in aviation is a smart choice to ensure we remain competitive to attract recreational and business travelers,” said **KAA President Paul Steely**. “It’s

always exciting to see a new airport open, and its presence will provide valuable services, as well as training opportunities to support the next generation of aviators and mechanics.”

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