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'The USVI Can Do Big Things': VIPA Announces Selection of Partner For Major Overhaul of Airport Terminals

Dowe and VIPA take bold step forward with significant redevelopment of the Cyril E. King and Henry E. Rohlsen Airports

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The Cyril's E. King Airport in St. Thomas, USVI By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

In a major move towards the redevelopment of airport terminals in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the V.I. Port Authority Board of Governors on Tuesday selected VIports Partners to spearhead the project at both Cyril E. King Airport (STT) and Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (STX).

This group is now set to enter a transition agreement with VIPA, encompassing the operation, maintenance, and financing of the redevelopment efforts at both airport terminals.

The decision came after VIPA received two compelling proposals in February, following its request for proposals for the Airports P3 (public-private partnership) project. A meticulous evaluation led by the authority's Evaluation Committee and based on the recommendation of VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe, resulted in VIports Partners being overwhelmingly chosen. Speaking on the partnership, Dowe expressed confidence and readiness for progress, stating, "This partnership proves that the USVI can do big things and that we are open for business. The time for progress is now, because the Caribbean and the rest of the world are not waiting for the U.S. Virgin Islands."

VIports Partners, the chosen group, is composed of key players in the industry, including Aecon Group Inc. as the Terminal Developer, Aecon/Tikehau Star Infra as Equity Providers, AvPorts LLC handling airport operations, and Corgan Associates, Inc. as Terminal Architects, among others. The group's proposal was lauded for offering the best overall value during the development and operational phases of both airports.

The redevelopment plan includes modernizing the airport amenities and the addition of passenger boarding bridges, aiming to significantly enhance the traveler experience and affirm the U.S. territory's status as a leading Caribbean destination.

A joint press conference is scheduled for April 5 at 11:00 a.m., where Governor Albert Bryan Jr. alongside VIPA officials will formally introduce the VIports Partners team to the public. The conference, set to be held at Government House in St. Thomas, is anticipated to further detail the scope and expectations of the redevelopment project.

To ensure the project's success, VIPA has enlisted the expertise of Frasca & Associates LLC as the P3 and Financial Advisor, with Mayer Brown LLP serving as the P3 Legal Advisor. Additional support comes from the Law Offices of Jennifer Jones and the Law Office of Trudy Fenster as Local Counsel. The Paslay Group has been appointed as the P3 Technical Advisor, while Public Strategy Group will handle communications for the initiative.