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VIPA Resolves FAA Compliance Order with Fine Settlement, Launches Extensive Runway Rehabilitation

VIPA reaches a \$382,000 settlement with the FAA, resolving compliance issues from a 2019 inspection. Key upgrades at Cyril E. King Airport, including taxiway improvements and enhanced airfield markings, reaffirm VIPA's commitment to safety and compliance

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United Airlines aircraft at the Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

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The V.I. Port Authority (VIPA) recently reached a settlement with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), resolving a compliance order following a 2019 inspection. Initially facing

a \$477,000 fine, VIPA's settlement brings the penalty down to \$382,000, with an immediate payment of \$275,000 required within 30 days of the agreement's signing in September 2024. The remaining \$107,000 will be waived provided VIPA remains in compliance with the agreement terms for two years.

VIPA board member Celestino White confirmed the terms of the settlement during a meeting, explaining the reduction from the original fine. VIPA's director of engineering, Preston Beyer, added that the issues primarily concerned the condition of taxiway pavements at Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, particularly on Taxiway Alpha West. Since the inspection, a complete project has been undertaken to replace the taxiway.

Additional findings cited airfield markings and VIPA's Notices to Air Missions (NOTAMs), the latter of which notify airlines of non-standard conditions. According to Mr. Beyer, VIPA successfully petitioned to remove one finding regarding NOTAMs and has since rectified other noted deficiencies. "The notices that go out to all of the airlines...to alert them of non-standard conditions," Beyer explained.

VIPA's Territorial Airport Manager, Jerome Sheridan, addressed concerns regarding occasional runway closures at Cyril E. King Airport due to asphalt issues. "We do not take these things lightly," Sheridan assured, noting that such instances are coordinated with airlines to keep all stakeholders informed. Beyer emphasized that the findings did not indicate the airport was unsafe, adding that similar issues are common at airports nationwide. Other airports with multiple runways can redirect flights during maintenance, which is not an option for Cyril E. King Airport.

Looking ahead, VIPA anticipates receiving FAA grant funding through the Airport Improvement Program for a runway rehabilitation project, with requests for proposals issued in July.