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VIPA Executive Director Addresses Runway Incidents, Cites Aging Infrastructure as Key Issue

VIPA ED Carlton Dowe acknowledged ongoing runway issues at Cyril E. King Airport, attributing them to deteriorating pavement over 30 years old. Repairs are planned, and bids for concrete overlays expected by April 4, followed by a grant request to the FAA

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A United Airlines jet at the Cyril E. King Airport. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

During the presentation of his report at Thursday's meeting of the Virgin Islands Port Authority Board, Executive Director Carlton Dowe addressed the several runway incidents that have taken place recently. "One of the challenges that we continue to experience is the blowouts at the

airfield.”

Calling the issue “annoying to everybody and to us in particular,” Mr. Dowe attributed the problem to the age of some of the airfield infrastructure. “Some of the pavement is in excess of 30-odd [years] in terms of the base, and then the lifespan of the asphalt pavement was like 10 to 15 years. We’ve already surpassed that.” Apart from the issues with age, Mr. Dowe noted that some aircraft maneuvers result in the planes “grinding into the already weakened asphalt.”

A recent incident, Mr. Dowe said, occurred when an aircraft [experienced a hydraulic leak](#) when landing at the Cyril E. King airport, which then caused a fire under the left rear wheel. The tire destroyed, the aircraft continued up the runway, “damaging the very same fragile area that we have.” Mr. Dowe was thankful that operations were restored at the airport relatively quickly, and that no injuries were recorded as a result of the incident.

With regards to addressing the condition of the pavement and asphalt on the airport runways, Mr. Dowe said that he expects to receive bids for work on the concrete overlays by April 4, which would then facilitate a subsequent grant submission to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Despite the current posture of the federal government in terms of expenditures, Mr. Dowe expressed that he was “still optimistic that we will be okay” in terms of funding, as safety and security in terms of air operations is still a priority.