

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dowe's Legacy Grows as Gregory Transportation Center Opens at Cyril E. King Airport

VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe, known as “Dowe Now,” was lauded for leading the \$33.2 million project through early opposition and delivering it on time, adding to his growing list of infrastructure successes.

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An aerial shot of the Gregory Transportation Center at Cyril E. King Airport, completed at a cost of \$33.2 million. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

On Thursday, the V.I. Port Authority declared the Dale A. Gregory Transportation Center at the Cyril E. King airport complete, marking the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The project [broke ground in May 2021](#), costing \$33.2 million. The first phase of the project was [opened last April](#) following a ceremony similar to Thursday's event.

"It was just a few years ago, when I looked through the window, I said we could cover that gravel and put a floor two or three on top of it," said VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe as he addressed the audience. He spoke about the importance of leaders sticking decisions that may seem unpopular with some, yet being highly impactful and beneficial to the community in the long run. He recalled push back received from the car rental companies who have agreements with VIPA, initially opposing fees that would enable the Port Authority to secure critical funding for the parking center at CEKA.

"They didn't go down quietly. It was a fight," he made known. "You don't do these kinds of projects without some kind of disagreement, but we cannot hold those disagreements forever." He drew reference to the Red Hook Transportation Center, as well. "We wanted to do three floors there. People start to scream, and we compromised." The Red Hook parking center has since recouped the \$5 million it cost to build — in half the time the authority had anticipated.

Throughout the event, speakers praised Mr. Dowe and his VIPA team for the track record of professionalism and completing a surfeit of important projects across the territory — on both the marine and air arms of VIPA. For Mr. Dowe, known as "Dowe Now" for his ability to start and complete projects, the secret continues to be manifold: active engagement, a motivated team, and a desire to lift the territory into the 21st century.

Ricardo Nater, Vice President of AT Construction Services, LLC, spoke to the assembled audience with "great respect and pride" about the successfully completed project. Noting that the job was made more challenging than usual because it had to be done right in front of an operating airport, Mr. Nater ascribed the favorable outcome to the quality of the team at hand. "When an experienced team composed of exceptional professionals and leaders get together with a common goal...nothing could stop them."

"I'm really glad to see it's completed," said Acting Senate President Avery Lewis, representing the 36th Legislature. "These are the type of projects we need to continue pushing in the Virgin Islands," he continued, noting that increasing hotel room capacity in the territory will commensurately increase the need for transportation facilities such as the parking center.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. also tied the newly-opened transportation center to the larger revitalization of downtown Charlotte Amalie. "We have an RFP out now to redo all of the landscaping for Upper Educators' Park," he noted. "We just got the Legislature to approve a \$10 million museum where that old federal building right next to the Vendors' Plaza is coming down," he continued, also mentioning the new food vendors' park "on the back side of Ford Christian," as well as a forthcoming technical center in the same area. "It's a lot of things going on and a lot of naysayers," Governor Bryan challenged. Speaking directly to the detractors, the governor declared "we are moving forward, so

don't listen to the fake news when they say it, because they want to paint a different picture.”

Also offering remarks was Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien, who, like other speakers, praised the VIPA team for their efficiency and professionalism. She noted that while the stress of overseeing her agency’s workload has started to show—joking about the gray hairs it has given her—VIPA was not to blame. “I am very appreciative of the professionalism of the Virgin Islands Port Authority because the Office of Disaster Recovery has 1,600 projects to manage, and to date we have completed 1,092 projects,” she said. “And today, I’m going to put a check mark—it’s now 1,093 projects completed.”

Although Thursday's ribbon-cutting ceremony marks the project officially complete, paid public parking will not begin at the facility until Monday.

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