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FAA Awards \$15.5 Million for New Fire and Rescue Station at Cyril E. King Airport

FAA has awarded \$15.49 million to Cyril E. King Airport for a new aircraft rescue and firefighting station, advancing a VIPA project that has moved through design and temporary-facility preparations as part of a \$481.7 million nationwide grant round.

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

The Federal Aviation Administration has awarded nearly \$15.5 million to Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas for a new aircraft rescue and firefighting facility, providing substantial federal funding for a project the V.I. Port Authority has been developing for more than two years.

FAA [records released Thursday](#) list \$15,485,255 for Cyril E. King Airport to “Construct/Expand Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Building.” The award is part of the agency’s latest round of fiscal year 2026 Airport Infrastructure Grants.

The U.S. Department of Transportation said the round includes 191 grants totaling approximately \$481.7 million for airport infrastructure and safety improvements across 36 states and two U.S. territories. Projects funded nationally include work on terminals, runways, taxiways, safety areas and other aviation infrastructure.

At Cyril E. King Airport, the federal money advances an Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting, or ARFF, station project that VIPA has already taken through multiple stages of planning, design and preparation.

ARFF personnel are specially trained and equipped to respond to aircraft fires, crashes and other emergencies at airports. FAA rules require certificated airports serving qualifying air-carrier operations to provide aircraft rescue and firefighting services while those operations are taking place.

Project Has Been in Development Since 2024

VIPA records show that work toward replacing the Cyril E. King Airport ARFF station began well before the latest federal award.

In August 2024, the Port Authority board approved a task order of up to \$202,550 for Stantec Consulting Services to perform program-definition and schematic-design work for the station. The work was funded from VIPA operating revenues.

The project moved further ahead in January 2025, when the board authorized another Stantec task order, this time for up to \$893,100, covering final design and permitting for a new ARFF station at the St. Thomas airport. That work was again funded through Port Authority operating revenues.

By October 2025, VIPA was also preparing temporary accommodations for its airport firefighters while the permanent station project advanced. The board approved a change order of up to \$41,932 for work at the Air Alliance Building, including replacement windows and air-conditioning improvements. VIPA said the building would serve as its temporary ARFF station.

A month later, the Port Authority revised its final-design authorization, allowing expenditures of up to \$1,098,123.77 for what VIPA formally described as the Cyril E. King Airport Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting Station Teardown and Rebuild project.

The board continued moving the project toward construction this year. In March, it approved an additional \$34,500 for professional services associated with a furniture, fixtures and equipment package for the station’s final design.

Those earlier design and preparation costs were funded through VIPA operating revenues. The newly announced \$15.49 million FAA grant represents a substantially larger federal investment tied directly to construction or expansion of the ARFF building.

Federal Award Does Not Establish Total Project Cost

The FAA grant record does not state the total anticipated cost of the Cyril E. King ARFF project, nor does it identify a construction contractor or provide a construction completion date.

For that reason, the \$15.49 million award should not necessarily be interpreted as covering the entire cost of tearing down and rebuilding the station. It represents the amount included in the FAA's latest Airport Infrastructure Grant announcement for the project.

The Airport Infrastructure Grant program was created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. FAA says the program provided \$14.5 billion in airport funding over five years beginning in fiscal year 2022, with eligible uses including runways, taxiways, terminals, safety improvements and other airport infrastructure. Fiscal year 2026 represents the fifth and final installment of funding under the program.

Cyril E. King Airport is one of the territory's two commercial airports and a major gateway into St. Thomas and the wider Virgin Islands. VIPA describes the airport as one of the busiest in the eastern Caribbean. Its single runway measures just over 7,000 feet, while its terminal complex contains 11 gates.

Part of Broader Work at St. Thomas Airport

The ARFF investment comes while other major infrastructure work is underway at Cyril E. King Airport.

VIPA began rehabilitation of the airport's runway in April, including removal and replacement of the upper three inches of pavement along with electrical improvements and new LED runway and navigational lighting. The work is being performed largely during overnight runway closures and is expected to continue through 2026.

The Port Authority is also pursuing a broader public-private partnership to modernize the territory's airports, including Cyril E. King on St. Thomas and Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix.

The newly awarded federal funding addresses a different but critical component of airport operations: ensuring that firefighters and emergency-response equipment have a modern facility from which to respond when an aircraft emergency occurs.

With final-design work already underway and temporary ARFF accommodations previously approved, the \$15.49 million FAA award marks the largest publicly identified funding commitment yet toward replacing the existing Cyril E. King Airport fire and rescue station.