

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Over \$3 Million In FAA Funding, Port Authority Commences Work On Rohlsen Airport Runway And Taxiway

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ST. CROIX --The runway and taxiway of the Henry E. Rohlsen airport will soon get a new lease of life, as the Virgin Islands Port Authority has contracted V.I. Paving to repave 2,400 linear feet of the main runway that has seen extensive deterioration, while sealcoating the entire length of the runway -- some 10,004 feet -- as well as the taxiway, located parallel south of the runway.

According to V.I.P.A. Senior Engineer Damian Cartwright, the project was made possible by \$3.6 million of discretionary Federal Aviation Administration funding, meaning the

monies were not guaranteed by the FAA but rather given on the basis of critical need.

V.I.P.A. Executive Director Carlton Dowe said his vision is to see the modernization of both airports in the territory. But he reminded that while the FAA's funding was critical to the success of his vision, also important to continued FAA funding was the continual reporting and auditing after every project that the federal agency requires.

"We do these things so that the money can keep coming," he said. "These are 90 percent funded by the federal government; the Port Authority in and of themselves would not be able to finance these projects."

Mr. Dowe also noted as critical the Anguilla Landfill issue that had in the past blocked millions of dollars from being released to V.I.P.A. The federal agency ordered the Government of the Virgin Islands to shutdown the waste disposal site which is in close proximity to the Rohlson airport, citing plane hazards such as birds that flock to the area looking for food and smoke from underground fires, among other issues.

Once the landfill stopped accepting trash from residents, trash collection centers were created, where waste is baled and then disposed of at the landfill in a manner that is acceptable to the FAA.

But the landfill is at or near capacity, and there have been recent problems, [such as fires](#), that could trigger yet another blockage of funds. Waste Management is also struggling to pay its contractors, which this week [caused a work stoppage on St. Croix](#).

"To me, what's critical and the word that we would like to get out there, is that that's why the landfill issue is so significant. The discretionary funding that Mr. Cartwright spoke to would be nil if in fact we don't control what's going on at the landfill," Mr. Dowe said.

Landfill issues notwithstanding, Mr. Dowe said V.I.P.A feels good about the project, which is expected to be completed in 100 days, according to contractual terms.

Vanise Aurelien, senior designer at V.I.P.A, said the sealcoating would add a new lease of life to the runway and the taxiway. But the area seeing the most attention, where actual paving will take place, is 2,400 feet of linear runway more to the west of the facility.

V.I.P.A. Assistant Executive Director David Mapp said there's been heightened interest in providing new services at the airport, and sees this project as important to the ongoing growth of the island. "It's amazing to me within the last year how much interest there is in St. Croix now. It's sort of like, to some companies, the new gem," he said.

Tod Young, vice president of V.I. Paving, said the company would do everything in its power to complete the project -- which will be conducted at nights -- on time.