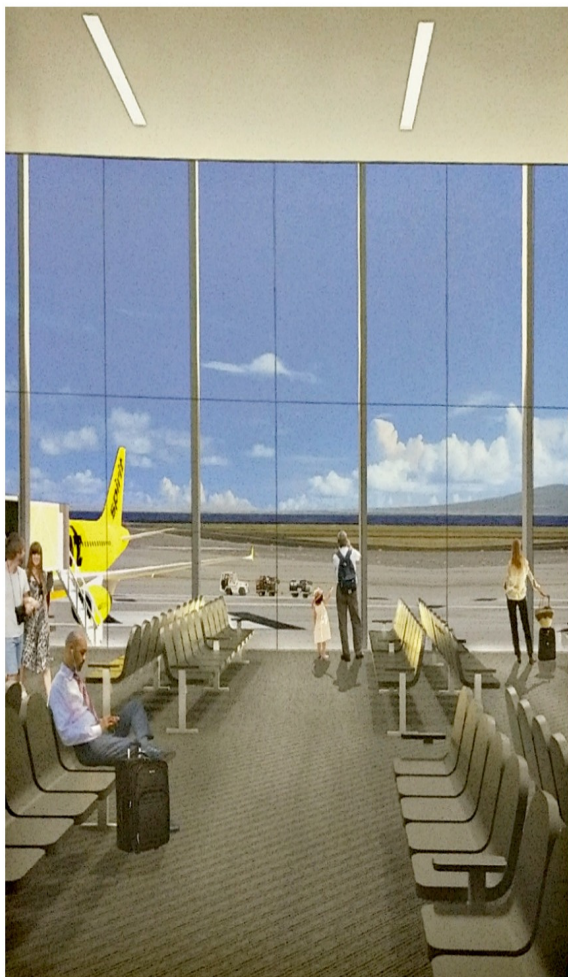


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Cyril E. King Airport Modernization Concepts Include Ferry Terminal; Airport Would Become Central Transportation Hub In St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Port Authority (V.I.P.A) on Tuesday night took the wraps off of its ambitious Cyril E. King Airport modernization plans at the University of the Virgin Islands' Sports and Fitness Center. A few months ago, Governor Kenneth Mapp announced the project, which is estimated to cost \$230 million, and said that it would be revealed in June.

The governor has made good on that promise, revealing the firms directly involved in the multi-phase project as North Carolina-based Kimley-Horn and Associates, two Florida-

based firms, Perez & Perez Architects Planners, and SDM Consulting Engineers, along with [The DeJong Group, PC](#), a St. Thomas-based firm offering architectural services. The authority invited members of the public to the event, a charrette, to learn more about the plans and perhaps offer suggestions.

Showing early concepts, officials explained their vision for the U.S. Virgin Islands and its public transportation future. Aside from jet bridges, parking garages and restaurant expansions, the most radical announcement was the inclusion of a connected ferry terminal that could make maritime travel for visitors on the island more fluid after exiting the terminal. The concepts show a pedestrian bridge that would allow arriving passengers to walk westward toward Lindbergh Bay Hotel and Villas over underlying traffic, to a newly built ferry terminal. The ferry terminal would sit on the same property as the Lindbergh Bay Hotel and Villas, providing more convenience and flexibility for travelers at the Cyril E. King Airport, according to V.I.P.A. Executive Director David Mapp.

The concepts, if actualized, would vastly transform the St. Thomas airport terminal. But Mr. Mapp did not forget St. Croix. "In about a month and a half, we'll be announcing the charrette on St. Croix for the Henry E. Rohlsen airport, because it too needs to be addressed," the V.I.P.A. executive director said. "It will have some of the similar features you see here, that will be able to attract new service from new cities, and developers that would like to come in and accommodate their guests comfortably."

Construction of the new airport terminal on St. Thomas would be done in phases, according to officials, with all of the work occurring during standard operating times at the facility. The first phase of construction would happen above the current boarding area.

Architects and officials detailed how the terminal would function; they even took the audience through simulated videos of what walking through the terminal would feel like. The new airport terminal would feature a second floor dedicated for departures, and an expanded restaurant and retail experience, jet bridges, and more efficient parking for airlines.

The ground level would be the designated location for pickups, drop-offs, general boarding procedures and baggage claim.

One thing remained unclear, however, and it's a big issue: funding for the ambitious project. The territory does not have access to the bond market, and though federal dollars can be used to repair -- and in some cases completely rebuild -- facilities damaged by disasters, there was no indication that the airport qualified. And a charrette by nature is one of the earliest stages for potential development. Two years ago, [charrettes were held for the development of the Altona Lagoon and Cramer Park](#) on the east end of St. Croix, but there's been no followup since. Back then, the governor conveyed confidently that the projects would not take too long before commencing. "I can assure you that it will be implemented and constructed, and if you all know me, it's not going to take ten years to get done," Mr. Mapp said. Two years later and no updates have been furnished.

Representatives from the selected architectural firms emphasized the potential impact the new airport terminal could have on St. Thomas, further explaining that it would

become the central transportation hub for the island. Airport roads would funnel cars through the terminal, with upgraded roads transporting taxis, buses, delivery trucks and residential commuters. Officials did not expand on any plans to address public transportation options for visitors and residents in the territory, which is often limited and in some cases nonexistent. However, the addition of a new ferry terminal at the only airport could begin to fix some of the transportation woes the islands have faced.

The panel of V.I.P.A. officials and members of private firms took questions from the audience in a mix and mingle fashion rather than an open mic event. The project team will be spending about 18 weeks ? or four months ? preparing more concepts and engaging the public before a final design is decided on.