

Regional airport ready to step up

By Chad Felton
 cfelton@news-herald.com
 @believethatcfnh on Twitter

Cleveland, at long last holding championship reins, is now the epicenter of the professional basketball world.

Next month, the city will be the focal point of the political universe, with hundreds of thousands arriving to participate in and attend the Republican National Convention.

Because of that fact, hundreds of thousands of businesses, public works facilities, attraction sites and surrounding environs are anticipating massive crowds the political assembly will yield.

And the Cuyahoga County Airport

AIRPORT » PAGE 7

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2016

NEWS-HERALD

Airport

FROM PAGE 1

(CGF-Cuyahoga Geauga Field, the Federal Aviation Administration's designation for the facility) at 26300 Curtiss Wright Parkway in Richmond Heights, is no different.

Airport officials are expecting to see an increase in air traffic, since, statistically speaking, in general terms, the facility sees about 35,000 takeoffs and landings a year, said John Myers, interim facilities administrator who provides oversight of the county airport.

"We receive a little less than 100 (takeoffs and landings) per day on average," he said.

"A fun fact is that we'll double the usage of normal activity during the RNC, with the combination of personal and corporate aircraft. Between Homeland Security, the Secret Service, Transportation Security Administration and the FAA all working together, we've exhibited and performed remarkable preparation."

In addition to the increase of services the airport will provide in preparation for the RNC, it's currently engaged in one of four phases, "a huge investment by county, state and federal entities," that will improve and enhance the overall quality of the runway and improve overall safety.

The four phases will reach a cost of \$42 million. The \$9 million Phase



CHAD FELTON — THE NEWS-HERALD

Cuyahoga County Airport in Richmond Heights is expecting to see an increase in air traffic.

1, the only phase without partnered funds, will be completed in the next few weeks.

"Most of the major earthwork — the trucking, hauling dirt and transportation — along Richmond Road is in its final stages," Myers said. "We're buttoning down before the RNC and regrading around the runway. We've had stormwater and drainage issues, which were anticipated, but with this first phase nearly finished, we will avoid shutting it (the runway) down. All wetness and ice issues will be improved through these phases, too, long after the convention is over."

Phase 2, said Myers, will essentially consist of "redoing" the runway, a \$10 million endeavor primarily using federal dollars.

"The airport will have a completely new runway. The FAA funds 90 percent, with the county supplying the other 10. Hopefully the state will partner with us in the effort to reduce local dollars," he said.

The last two combined phases will address additional safety concerns, including the installation of an engineered materials arresting system, or arrestor bed, which will stop planes from overrunning while preventing human injury and aircraft damage.

"The (engineered materials arresting system) will aid in emergency landings, should we have any, and if something goes awry," Myers said. "This installation is the main difference between the third and fourth phase. It's presently still be-

ing engineered and going out to bid. We're looking at 2018. The goal is to operate the safest airport possible."

In further efforts to continue positioning itself for the future as a business attraction tool and source of controlled economic development, the Cuyahoga County Airport will continue its standard of handling operations of general aviation traffic through a myriad of industries and services.

"We remain successful in a variety of areas of corporate, commercial and aviation-based interest," Myers said. "And we continue to provide timely access across the world while we steadfastly maintain our routine relationships with major industries through private charters, time-sen-

"We offer 'less hassle' than flying out of Hopkins, which will be evident for a lot of people with the RNC being hosted here."

— John Myers, interim facilities administrator who provides oversight of the county airport

sitive deliveries, opportunities for future pilots through flight school and even a fleet of jets to buy into."

With the closing of JB Milano's restaurant at the airport, "We have very few direct services to the public other than aircraft and pilot training," Myers said. "The airport's identity stays intact because of its small yet intimate appeal as many companies have their own hangars with us, and we, in that way, continue to expand. And it remains a challenge since the largest planes we see here hold only up to 20 passengers who are looking for timely traffic. We have no reliever airport."

"We offer 'less hassle' than flying out of Hopkins, which will be evident for a lot of people with the RNC being hosted here," he said.

"The world will be watching Cleveland, and we want it to be known that we provide an alternative base and that everything is copacetic."