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Airport improvements on the way.

The Oregon Department of Transportation awarded the City of Salem \$3.8 million in Connect Oregon II funding to pay for two airport improvements. The first improvement is enlarging the current passenger terminal by 3,800 square feet. The second is extending the main jet runway another 1,000 feet.

These improvements are drastically needed in Salem in order to remain competitive with other cities. Salem has the shortest runway in the state in comparison to other airports who have commercial jet service. Passenger planes and several corporate jets cannot utilize their full capacity on hot days due to the shorter runway. Because the air is thinner on hot days, jets require a longer runway in order to take off. The heavier the plane, the longer the runway required. The passenger terminal is currently designed to handle 20,000 passengers a year. After the first year of commercial air service, over 46,500 passengers have passed through the terminal building.

Work could begin on the passenger terminal this fall and the runway contraction will begin next year after the environment assessment is completed. It is hoped to have the runway project completed by 2010.