

OPINION

FLAGLER PERSPECTIVE

New runway lays out welcome mat for development

While the Flagler Executive Airport has seen its share of jet aircraft traffic at the former U.S. Navy facility, it truly entered the jet age last week with a ceremony officially opening a new, longer runway.

The new runway is the crowning piece of nearly \$40 million in improvements and upgrades over the past eight years, including the construction of an airport control tower. With the new runway, the Flagler facility is able to handle a larger volume of traffic and potentially increase sales of jet and aviation fuel because the longer runway will allow aircraft to take on more fuel.

That is important because as a so-called enterprise fund, the airport is responsible for generating its own operating revenue and fuel sales are one of the facility's primary revenue engines.

But what is even more important is the project emphasizes the county's commitment to not only

maintaining the airport as a viable enterprise, but expanding and enhancing the field in recognition of the role it plays in the economic development of Flagler County.

The project involved moving the airport's main runway about 400 feet south and building a 5,500-foot runway, which is 501 feet longer than its predecessor.

Airport officials said the new runway makes the facility safer for flight operations and gives pilots a larger margin of error in the event of mishaps. It also shows the county's commitment to expanding economic development opportunities and making Flagler County an attractive place for new business development and expansion.

Situated between larger and better known communities to the north in Jacksonville, south in Daytona Beach and west to Orlando, Flagler County's economic development

efforts are the very definition of "thinking outside the box." The expansion of the main runway at the airport enhances the county's transportation networks, which can be an important factor in attracting new business development.

It is also tangible proof of the county's determination to be forward-thinking by having the infrastructure in place to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

The new runway may be just over a mile long, but its real significance cannot be measured simply by its physical length, but by the message it sends to site selectors and corporate managers: Flagler County wants your business.

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