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Tuesday, November 14, 2006

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\$15 million airport upgrade to proceed

Work needed even if A380s canceled

By **Bill Wolfe**
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The Courier-Journal

Louisville International Airport is proceeding with an upgrade to accommodate mammoth Airbus A380 freighter jets ordered by UPS -- even though the European manufacturer is behind on production and some industry experts say the cargo plane could be delayed further or canceled.

The improvements, budgeted at \$15 million, include adding a taxiway along the west runway and possibly widening the runway. The work will be needed even if the Airbus deal falls through, airport and UPS officials said.

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UPS also has agreed to buy 10 Boeing 747-400s, which are smaller than A380s but still large enough to require the Louisville airport improvements. The A380 has a wingspan of more than 261 feet. The 747-400's wingspan exceeds 211 feet.

"What that means is



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A plane took off yesterday from Louisville International Airport's west runway, which will have a taxiway added and may be widened. (By Michael Clevenger, The Courier-Journal)

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sorting building, Swann said.

"Whatever happens with the A380 shouldn't really impact or change the direction for the airport itself," said Mark Giuffre, a spokesman for Louisville-based UPS Airlines, who praised Louisville International for preparing for long-term needs.

The 747-400s are scheduled for delivery beginning in June. Work on the upgrades is scheduled to begin in the spring.

UPS, which has 10 A380s on order, recently learned that the initial deliveries would be pushed back about six months to spring 2010. The airline is evaluating options but still has its order in place.

Last week, FedEx canceled its order for 10 A380s because of delays in the program.

Swann said the airport improvements also will be needed to meet a new Federal Aviation Administration rule.

FAA regulations call for wider runways and more separation between runways and taxiways for the largest planes, such as the A380 or 747-400, which are classified as Aircraft Design Group 6.

When visibility is limited, airports must treat Group 5 planes -- the next size below -- as Group 6, Swann said.

The runway and taxiway improvements are part of an airport master plan that was reaffirmed in 2003, she said.

Reporter Bill Wolfe can be reached at (502) 582-4248.

when you have larger aircraft on your field, then you have to have more space to accommodate and move more around quickly," airport spokeswoman Rande Swann said.

The new, 100-foot-wide taxiway also will be needed for access to the Louisville International Commerce Center, where the Chautauqua Airlines maintenance complex is located, and to a FedEx air-package

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Kudos to the RAA for developing the infrastructure of SDF but it's too bad that the passenger terminal and the air service that goes with it takes a back seat to UPS worldport. I know there was a \$40 million dollar terminal renovation just completed, but this effort pales in comparison to what the competing cities around Louisville are doing. I know Indy just approved a \$1 billion upgrade of their passenger facility and Cincinnati has had Delta's hub for almost 2 decades now. When are the local Louisville officials going to wake up and realize that without a substantial increase in passenger service especially non-stop flights to the West Coast and possibly Canada, Mexico, and Europe Louisville will never be able to consider itself a world class city. NO non-stops NO increase in business investment, NO growth, NO ability to grow. I as a former resident now living in San Francisco know how much it effects outsiders perception of my home that I desire to return to some day.

Posted: Wed Nov 15, 2006 4:43 am

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