

Boeing may expand MidAmerica operations

BY DANIEL KELLEY
News-Democrat

Boeing may soon expand its operations and bring more jobs to MidAmerica. St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, according to Airport Director Tim Cantwell.

The Boeing Corp., an international aerospace and defense corporation based in Chicago, expects to expand its operations as the company successfully bids on work in the coming months, Cantwell told the St. Clair County Public Building Commission on Thursday. And the company has set its sights on MidAmerica because of the air-

port's relatively cheap operating costs, Cantwell said.

No specifics were given in terms of jobs or timetable. Boeing representatives could not immediately be reached for comment.

Boeing is examining the cost of expanding and has been absorbing more work and machinery into the airport building in the past year. The potential expansion would be done incrementally as opposed to a large, single project.

Cantwell said he could not discuss the possible expansion in detail due to nondisclosure agreements, but noted the company's 80 employees have "filled out" Boeing's current

building. The company began operating a subassembly plant for military aircraft at the airport about two years ago.

County leaders met with Boeing on Monday to discuss the company's future at the airport, according to Cantwell.

Other growth

Another company based at the airport has seen growth as well. North Bay Produce Inc. of Traverse City, Mich., has grown from six employees to 11 employees since beginning operations in June, Cantwell said.

The company distributes fresh produce from a 36,000-square-foot, refrigerated warehouse at the airport. North Bay

representatives could not immediately be reached for comment.

The county also continues fishing for customers in its effort to establish MidAmerica as a trade hub with China.

At the top of the airport's list is importers and exporters of seafood, such as oysters, clams, lobsters and caviar, according to county consultant Larry Taylor.

Those products and others could eventually be shipped to MidAmerica's Chinese partner — Ningbo Lishe International Airport.

The Chinese airport currently is undergoing the construction of a large refrigerated warehouse as part of a \$1.3 billion improvement program.

Yet another field of dreams?

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I READ YOUR recent article "County greasing skids for new development" with great interest. I'm still not clear on all the hows and whys for a proposed Rieder Road exit off Interstate 64, but it's inappropriate to tie Scott Air Force Base's needs as a justification for this exit.

As reported in the article, Scott is planning to make upgrades to its Cardinal Creek gate but that military construction project has been on the books for years and has more to do with tenant increases and needs on base than access issues off it. Access to this gate via Air Mobility Drive and Wherry Road is adequate with the only choke point being current limitations at the gate itself.

It reminds me of a line from the movie, "Field of Dreams": Build it and they will come. Is that the smart way to justify this major construction project?



Just like in the movie, the plan seems to be to tear up a bunch of corn fields, furiously build and hope to attract "players." Shouldn't the first question be, "We need an exit at Rieder Road here because?"

This sounds like the same methodology used to build MidAmerica and look how that turned out.

Bill Malec
O'Fallon