

'Fully funded' \$150M first phase of Memphis International's terminal modernization gets underway

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Alan Howell | Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority (MSCAA)

Memphis International Airport (MEM)'s terminal and parking deck

Phase 1 of Memphis International Airport's \$700-\$800 million Terminal Modernization and Seismic Program (TMSP) is officially underway.

The Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority (MSCAA) has put out the first RFP for the procurement of materials to begin work on the project, which should keep contractors busy for years, according to Scott Brockman, president and CEO of the MSCAA.

"These [RFPs] are going to be going out over the next seven to 10 years," he said. "This is a long program. Right now, what you're seeing is the pieces that are in the first phase, which is \$150 million. That phase is fully funded. We're ready to rock and roll."

MEM's development team

The TMSP project is planned to be very similar to the modernization of Concourse B, according to Brockman. He hopes the terminal modernization's first phase will break ground this summer, but that date is contingent on a process that has to progress.

"We still have to get the bids in, file grant applications, and other [items]," Brockman said. "Those have got to get approved. We've got to get a grant agreement, and then we can actually start turning people loose. That will probably be sometime in the July-ish time frame according to what we've been told. So hopefully we break ground by August."

The construction manager at risk (CMAR) is a tri-venture of New York-based Turner Construction Co., which has a large Memphis office; Chicago-based Ardmore Roderick; and Memphis-based Chris Woods Construction Co.

The architect team is the same as the renovation of Concourse B, with local firm UrbanArch in partnership with Minnesota-based aviation design firm Alliance.

"What we're trying to do is to bring that same [Concourse B] look, feel, [and] comfort to the front of the building," Brockman said.

The planner is Michigan-based Jacobson/Daniels, which does a wide variety of airport planning. And the construction administrator is MFA, a tri-venture between local firms O.T. Marshall Architects, Fleming Architects, and Aaron Patrick Architects.

Brockman said that the development group has been meeting ahead of bids going out to figure out how to make the airport continue to flow while construction moves forward. He pointed out that Concourse B was simpler since the airport was able to simply put up a construction wall and close it off to build. This time, it will be complicated.

“This is where it gets complex. We're operating a terminal that still has to function while we're under construction,” Brockman said, “which is why we brought the contractor, the engineers and architects, the planner, and the construction administrator to gather together in one team ahead of time so that they could look at the flow. It's not as easy to just go, 'We'll put up a construction wall and start building.' You still have to get people in and out of the terminal.”

'Clean lines of sight'

Brockman said that Phase 1 is laying the groundwork for additional phases at MEM. Phase 1 work includes getting materials in place, demolishing the current exterior wall, and doing roadway work — plus doing it all without any systems coming offline.

“We are setting up the front of the building to be able to expand,” Brockman said. “When I say roadway work, it's connecting the inner road to the outer road. If you've been to the airport, if you stand on the inner road, there are three lanes. There is about a 20-foot gap between the inner roads and the outer roads and bridges that go across. So the first step is to come in and actually make that all contiguous. Then we can start rerouting traffic to the outer lane, and we can start to build into the inner lanes, which is where the expansion is going.”

Brockman said that certain phases of the airport's master plan may happen simultaneously depending on when funding comes in. Plans in the pipeline total \$700-\$800 million, a number that Brockman said could even be higher as inflation and rising construction costs are taken into consideration. The idea of the development is to do it as it gets funding, meaning several phases could be under construction at once.

"It keeps the project going," Brockman said. "There's no way that we can just issue a contract for \$800 million. We don't have that ability. It's got to be metered based upon funding and has got to be dealt with by what can be built while not disrupting passenger traffic. There are a lot of pieces that have to be taken into consideration."

The first RFP put out — for Phase 1A — is anticipated to cost \$20 million and involves enabling work on the terminal modernization project, with upgrades to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, plus escalators and elevators.

One of the early goals for Phase 1 is the ticket lobby and setting up the eventual reconfiguring of the airport into a single terminal.

"There's going to still be a bunch of entrances. The key idea is the current front. Instead of being three different defined terminals A, B, and C, that it all will be one continuous terminal," Brockman said. "The core of the vertical transportation, meaning going down to baggage claim and down to the lower level to go out to the economy garage and the rental cars, that will be in the center of the terminal complex. Someone dropping off or picking up can come in anywhere along that process, get out of the weather, and come into the building and walk internally. The idea, though, is to make all that open and have clean lines of sight."



Stephen MacLeod

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