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Aviation park gets \$2.5M. for start-up

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GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP - Developers of a proposed aviation research and development park in Egg Harbor Township are getting \$2.5 million in federal funds to finally start construction on the project.

The federal Economic Development Authority, or EDA, money would pay for roads, utilities and other initial site work, which could begin in about a year to 18 months.

"Today, we witness great achievements that can be made when public and private interests come together," said U.S. Rep Frank LoBiondo, R-2nd, who helped secure the funding. "With academic institutions, private businesses and federal, state and local government working in partnership for the creation of the aviation research and technology park, we will move South Jersey to the forefront of the aviation industry."

Officials gathered at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey here for the funding announcement Monday also said there's still much work to be done - and other financing to obtain - before the park opens.

An executive summary of the project, which would be built on 55 acres across from the Federal Aviation Administration's William J. Hughes Technical Center, set costs for the project's first phase, which includes an initial 44,500-square-foot building, at:

- n \$5.8 million for utility installation and a new entry boulevard.

- n More than \$1.3 million for site improvements for the first building.

- n \$8.7 million for the first building. The price includes design and contractors fees.

- n More than \$484,000 in laboratory equipment.

- n \$500,000 for staff and expenses, which would cover most costs related to getting environmental permit approvals and marketing the site to prospective tenants.

Dennis Weiss, dean of natural sciences and mathematics at Stockton and who is coordinating the project for the college, said the plans are "fluid" and could change as the months pass.

However, those backing the project were quick to praise it Monday.

EDA Regional Administrator Phil Saputo estimated the project could stimulate up to \$100 million in private sector investments and about 2,000 high-paying jobs.

Stockton President Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. said the college is developing curriculum related to the park, which would provide significant opportunities for college staff and students.

And Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson said the park will provide the county with a larger diversity of jobs.

The park will be built on land owned by the FAA. It is bordered by Delilah Road and Amelia Earhart Boulevard.

The plan calls for attracting companies that would engage in research and development for aviation projects such as communications, radar, military systems, airport operations, and security and safety.

The park's master plan involves eventually building about 295,000 square feet of research and development facilities.

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