

# Chattanooga Airport prepares \$1.5 million upgrade that would double rental car space

September 24th, 2014 | by Mike Pare | in Business Around the Region | Read Time: 2 mins. |



The Chattanooga Airport's rental car area is slated to almost double in size.  
Photo by Tim Barber/Times Free Press.

Chattanooga Invista employee Judy Ciulis says the nylon manufacturer regularly rents cars at Lovell Field so she's looking forward to a \$1.5 million upgrade that would almost double the lot's size.

"The company uses it a lot," she said as she returned a rental car last week, adding that the revamped space will offer people more options.

One of the biggest improvements to the airport's rental car area in decades will boost the number of vehicle spaces from 94 to 178, said Terry Hart, chief executive at Lovell Field.

"It's very much limited today," Hart said. "It's not a positive experience for customers."

Airport Authority member Tom Snow said it appears that rental car agencies often run short of vehicles in the middle of the workweek.

Airport officials, who earlier this month approved the project, expect work to start by the end of this month and continue in phases. Completion is slated by March 2015.

Hart said the work's time frame is so lengthy as to inconvenience customers as little as possible.

"There's simply no place to put them right now," he said.

Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Hertz and National are rental car agencies located at the airport.

Hart said that while there's currently one rental car lane adjacent to the terminal loop road, that will be expanded to two. He said a fence that separates the rental car space from some hangars and a ramp area will be moved. The entrances to two hangars will be enhanced as well, officials said.

"We now have the ability to grow that [rental] lot," Hart said.

The Airport Authority acquired use of the space when it bought out general aviation services provider TAC Air for \$12.3 million earlier this year.

Project funding will come from the proceeds of a \$2 per transaction fee paid by users of rental cars at the airport, Hart said. The fee has collected about \$1.5 million, which must be used for rental car area improvements.

Hart said the airport also garners about \$20,600 annually from rental car companies that pay for the spaces they reserve for their patrons. That revenue is to increase by \$17,600 a year after the project is done, he said.

Hart said rental companies are "very much looking forward to this project."

Plans in the future call for covering the cars and sidewalks from the elements.

Dillard Construction will do \$1.1 million in work for the project. Allen & Hoshall was awarded \$197,000 for engineering services related to the construction. The design for the project was done earlier this year.

Hart said that Dillard, which previously worked on the airport's solar farm, was the only project bidder on the rental car lot expansion.

"There are a lot of projects going on in the area," Hart said. He added that the airport has another project on the west side of the main runway and some potential bidders didn't want to get overtaxed.

*Contact Mike Pare at [mpare@timesfreepress.com](mailto:mpare@timesfreepress.com). or 423-757-6318.*