



DETROIT METRO • WILLOW RUN
WAYNE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

L.C. Smith Terminal • Mezzanine
Detroit, MI 48242
ph 734 942 3550
fax 734 942 3793
www.metroairport.com

News Release

Media contacts:
WCAA Michael Conway 734-942-3558
Yankee Air Dan Pierce 314-717-4750
Michael Montgomery 248-224-7330

75-year-old runway, re-built and re-opened at Willow Run Airport *--First departure is a 69-year-old historic aircraft*

VAN BUREN TWP., MI (October 30, 2014): Runway 5R/23L, opens for business again today at **Willow Run Airport**. Originally built in 1939-40, the runway has been closed for parts of the past two construction seasons for a total re-build. The first departure on the newly dedicated concrete will be *Yankee Lady*, a fully-restored B-17 aircraft, and the pride and joy of Willow Run's **Yankee Air Force**.

The 7,526-foot runway is Willow Run's longest and its only Instrument Landing System (ILS) runway. It was originally built to launch B-24 Bombers for the U.S. Army Air Corps, which were manufactured at the adjacent Willow Run Bomber Plant. All of the existing runway pavement and its lighting system was removed and replaced. The \$45 million project included the removal of little used **Runway 14/32** and the reconfiguration of **Taxiway C**. Centerline lights were upgraded to LED which shine brighter and use less energy. Upgraded Nav aids improve safety by providing additional guidance to pilots.

"We could not have accomplished this project without the tremendous cooperation of the **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)**," said **Thomas Naughton, CEO of Wayne County Airport Authority** which operates both Willow Run and **Detroit Metropolitan Airport**. "Local FAA officials worked hard to obtain 90% of the funding, with another 5% coming from the **Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics**."

"Willow Run is an important reliever airport for Detroit Metropolitan and air operators here provide essential cargo and general aviation services for our business community," said Naughton. "This runway, with its length and all-weather instrumentation is a critical piece of this region's transportation infrastructure."

Pavement from the old runway was crushed on-site and re-used to form the 12-inch gravel base for the new one. Six inches of asphalt was installed atop the base and finally 14.5 inches of concrete forms the pavement for a total of 32.5 inches of building material. Runway 5R/23L is 150-foot wide, not including 25-foot wide shoulders on both sides for the entire 7,526-foot length.

The project also included approximately \$3 million of drainage improvements. Eighteen miles of electrical cable were installed for the new runway lighting and 50,000 cubic yards of concrete were used to construct the new runway. That's enough concrete to build a four-foot-wide sidewalk from Willow Run Airport to Lake Michigan.

At the second part of this event, the **Yankee Air Museum** will: officially close on its purchase of a portion of the historic **Willow Run Bomber Plant** assuring that part of the plant will be preserved for future generations, announce a major financial commitment to the Bomber Plant project, unveil a new name and logo for the Museum, and launch the next phase of the **Save the Bomber Plant** fundraising campaign to raise the funds needed to complete the interior and exhibits of the new museum.

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