

# LOCALNEWS

## Designs show planned airport improvements

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

Improvements that would accommodate security requirements for larger groups passing through and boarding at the Falls International Airport face a number of challenges.

Designs for the improvements have been included with a request to the Minnesota Legislature and Gov. Mark Dayton for \$3 million from the state's sale of bonds. Money for billions of dollars worth of capital investment projects across the state are being sought. It is estimated the state will bond for just less than \$1 billion in the next session, scheduled to begin Feb. 25.

The airport project is the community's second bonding priority, just behind a request for a sewer project involving communities adjacent to Voyageurs National Park. A joint powers board is asking for \$8.5 million, with \$7.3 million for an extension of sewer service to

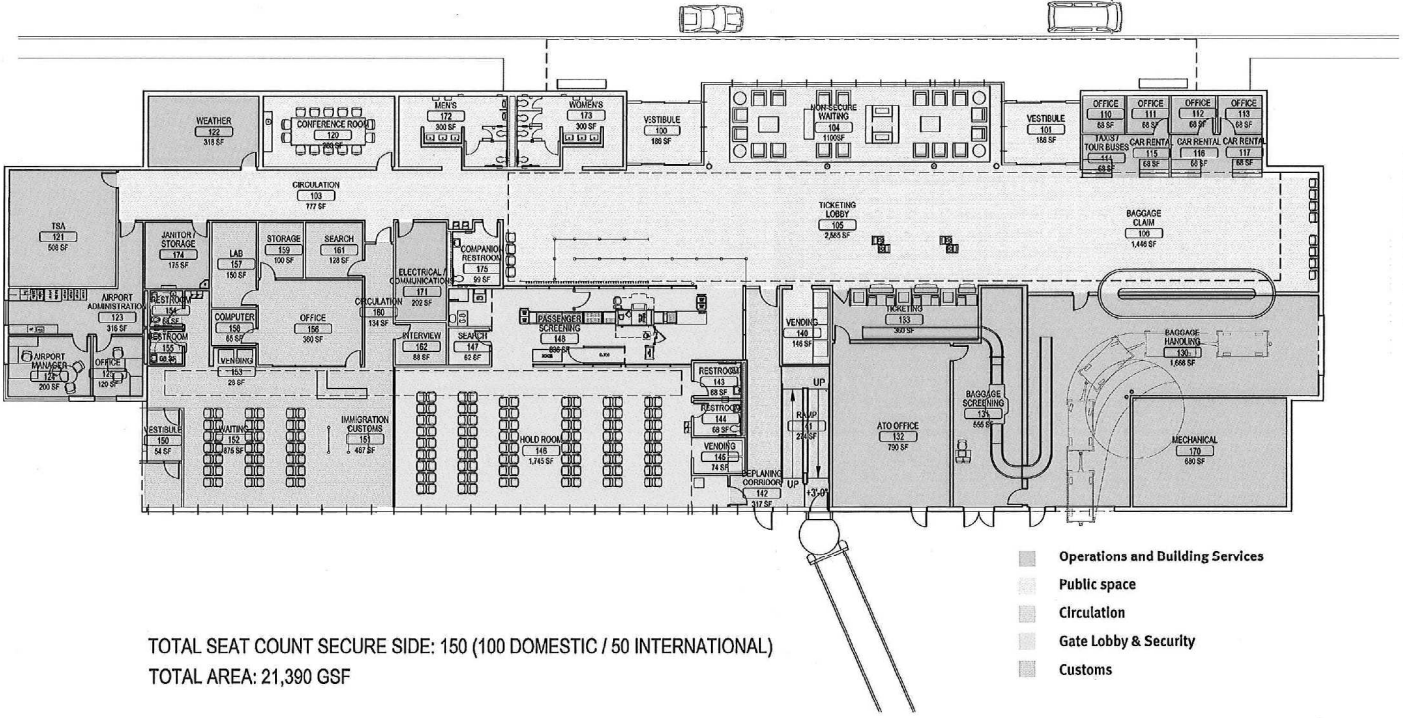
Dove Island on Rainy Lake and the remainder for a sewer system in Crane Lake.

The airport is jointly owned by International Falls and Koochiching County and governed by a local airport commission, made up of county and city representatives.

Airport Commission Chairman Bob Anderson, who also serves as Falls mayor, recently discussed the need for the funding. He said the money would be used to renovate the administration building at the airport to accommodate larger groups in a secure area, add bathrooms to that area and expand it for official inspections.

The area is known as the terminal's sterile area.

Anderson earlier sent a letter to Dayton saying the sterile area for passengers that have cleared screening is very small and "most of the year, the number of passengers overwhelms the sterile area and crams the passengers into that small room."



The letter also said the sterile area has no bathrooms and after being cleared in the area, if a passenger has a need for the bathroom, they must leave the sterile and be re-screened before being allowed to board the aircraft.

Anderson has said there are times passengers wait up to an hour before going through screening.

"It's not a very convenient setup," he has said.

In addition, the terminal is in need of a larger area for U.S. Customs and Border Protection to accommodate international flights, Anderson explained. He has described that area as the size of "about two phone booths big."

He said the number of people that can come in on an international-bound flight is limited to 16 or less passengers,

which has forced flights by the Detroit Red Wings hockey team and the Rolling Stones to seek airport services elsewhere because the planes were carrying more than 16 passengers.

But Anderson has acknowledged even if the state provides the bonding money, the city and county will each have to provide \$500,000 as a local share.

"This will be a challenging piece to put together," he said.

In addition, he said the project would seek a couple million dollars from the Federal Aviation Administration for the project.

"There are a lot of ifs," he said, "still so, we will move forward with the plans."

Should the funding not be available, he said the project could be planned for 2015 or 2016.

## It's that time of year to find the perfect Christmas tree

BY DANAE SCHAFER

It is the time of year when a lot of people are out seeking the perfect tree to put in their home for the Christmas season.

Many people automatically look to buy a tree from a commercial retailer, but

there are other options for Koochiching county residents.

The Department of Natural Resources issues permits for Christmas trees to be cut on state land. The permit is generally good for up to four trees not more than 10 feet tall for personal use, and

costs \$25. These are available at DNR Forestry offices in International Falls, Littlefork, and Big Falls.

This permit would be good for trees that have grown in place naturally (not a tree that has been planted). There are many species in our area that make good Christmas

trees. Black spruce and balsam fir are at the top of the list. The forester who issues the permit will likely have an area they can direct you to look, or perhaps you already have the right tree picked out.

Another option is a free permit from the Koochich-

ing County Highway Department. The permits from the county highway department are good for trees within the ditch not beyond the back-slope, not in residential areas (private property), and no white pine. These free permits can be picked up from the county highway de-

partment in the courthouse annex in International Falls.

I hope you will take advantage of one of these methods to find your perfect tree and make memories doing so.

*Schafer is a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources forester stationed in Littlefork.*

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