



Governor signs bill giving \$10 million for airport terminal

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NORTH BEND, Ore. (AP) — The need to expand North Bend Municipal Airport was driven by all the private jets flying in with people headed to the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, but Gov. Ted Kulongoski said Thursday the new terminal that will be built with \$10 million in lottery bonds will help the economy of the whole region.

"Many people think that this bill is about golf, but this bill is also about economic development for the entire southern coastline," said Kulongoski, who signed the bill authorizing the funds at the airport. "Having a healthy and flourishing airport that is accessible to commercial and private travel helps attract new businesses and retain existing ones."

The new terminal, as well as a new control tower and taxiway being built with federal funds, should all be finished within two and a half years, said Gary LeTellier, executive director of the Coos County Airport District.

The airport currently handles about 70,000 passengers a year, and is growing at a rate of 20 percent a year, LeTellier said. The new terminal will allow the airport to deal with more than one commercial jet at one time, and leave the existing terminal for the exclusive use of private jets.

"We are bringing a lot of corporate CEOs and CFOs from all over the world in here," said LeTellier. "They are coming here to play golf. But some of them are coming back and saying, 'Gee, you know this is a good area to bring our business.'"

As a consequence, he said, "our local development council is working with the port authority and us. There are several proposed developments on the horizon here that are going to add to that growth substantially."

The southern Oregon Coast was still struggling from the collapse of timber and commercial fishing in 1999 when Chicago greeting card company owner Mike Keiser opened the first links course at Bandon Dunes.

A third course opened this year and the resort expects to see 100,000 rounds of golf a year played on them. The resort employs 460 staff plus 325 caddies.

House Republican leaders held up the bill for a time in a dispute with Democrats over a school funding bill.

"We put all that behind us," said Sen. Wayne Krieger, R-Gold Beach. "I think this has huge impacts for the future."

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