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The Fredericton International Airport is getting a \$30-million expansion to almost double the 56-year-old airport's footprint. It's timely as the airport had a record-breaking number of passengers in 2018.

"We've been bursting at the seams," says Kate O'Rourke, communications officer, Fredericton International Airport Authority Inc., noting that the airport's official capacity of 200,000 passengers will rise to 500,000 when the project is complete in two years. Last year the airport had 420,000 passengers.

"We're working with a building that is really, really old (built in 1963) and a lot of what we are doing is bringing it into the modern era," says O'Rourke, including comfort and energy efficiency upgrades.

Construction started this June with the building scheduled for completion in 24 months. Project manager Bird Construction Group is overseeing the addition of about 2,000 square metres to the existing 4,250 square metre airport terminal. The work will be done in three phases.

Project Challenges

One of the challenges is to keep the airport fully operational while demolishing about half of it, says Bird's project manager Jordan Forsythe.

To be completed by February, phase one involves gutting the departures area and construction of a new departures space and baggage handling area. The work includes a conventional steel structure with concrete masonry block wall and metal cladding.

Pedestrian traffic is being rerouted to the opposite end of the airport during demolition, he says.

The airport apron is being redesigned to provide appropriate drainage and also to meet modern building code requirements.

To minimize dust, noise and other disruptions to the airport occupants that would have resulted from the removal of the concrete and asphalt material from the original apron, the demolished material was milled and stockpiled on site. Most of it will be reused in other locations at the airport, says Forsythe.

The airport authority has also worked closely with consultants to minimize and eliminate flight delays, says O'Rourke.

The project requires a number of renovations — some of which could reveal surprise conditions that could tax crews on a tight schedule, says Forsythe. There are some milestones that have to be completed to keep the ball rolling before phase two can start next winter, he adds.

Unlike some airport construction projects, however, this project does not encroach on airspace. Most of the work can be done during daytime hours, says Kyle Mathers, project manager, Mathers Project Management Consulting.

Other Construction Details

Procore construction management software is used by Bird, the subtrades, the airport authority and consulting engineer Stantec to track the flow of construction.

“It turns (construction) documents around faster; it provides accountability throughout the document chain,” says Forsythe.

The expansion includes a new ticketing hall, a large open waiting room and improved baggage and passenger screening. The new building will also have more natural lighting, and separate systems for heating and cooling.

O’Rourke says the airport authority has had to be “pretty creative” to accommodate more passengers in recent years than the airport was originally meant to handle. To expedite passenger movement, a second security line was added two years ago along with a number of other moves to improve pedestrian flow. The steel frame extension is being designed to blend into the original section. It will be clad in metal with a glass curtainwall, she says.
