FAA will pay 95 percent of costs, city will pay remainder from 1-cent sales tax

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times Earlier this year, staff with the City of Liberal submitted a 10-year airport capital improvement list of projects to the Federal Aviation Administration. The city's airport engineering firm, H.W. Lochner Inc. of Kansas City, Mo., assisted in the development of the project listing based on future needs. The submitted projects are ranked by the FAA as part of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems whereby nearly 3,400 existing eligible airports receive federal grants under the Airport Improvement Program.

The Liberal Municipal Airport is in line for more than $4.4 million in AIP funds for a project to rehabilitate parallel Taxiway A and Taxiway C in fiscal year 2014.

The FAA's portion of the grant will be 95 percent, with the city to provide 5 percent matching funds, which would be a little more than $200,000.

Airport manager Debbie Giskie explained the project to commissioners at Tuesday's meeting. "

It will be completely rehabilitated," she said, of the two taxiways. "We'll take it down to a base and start over. First thing we need to do is approve the project, then allocate matching funds of $222,125. Then we need to begin the design and the bid phase of the project with H.W. Lochner."

Giskie said with the city's capital improvement program, the project will likely go out for bid in February 2014, with work to be completed sometime late next year.

Liberal will likely host an air show in 2014, and Giskie said airport officials are hoping to have the upgrades completed in time for the event.

"They will have to work the project, hopefully, in phases so that we'll be able to have an air show," she said. "I don't know how exactly they'll design it. I assume they're going to do one half of it and then do the other half."

In a memo to commissioners, Giskie explained that once bids are approved, the FAA will offer the grant for the project, and commission action will be required to approve the bids and accept the grant at that time.

“In the meantime, the design and bid process needs to begin,” she said.

Commissioner Joe Denoyer said work such as is being proposed at Liberal’s airport is essential to the community’s quality of life.

“I think it’s important with the uncertainty of EAS funds and what the future holds with municipal airports that we continue to improve our airport,” he said.

The commission unanimously approved the taxiway project, allocating a 5 percent match of $222,15 from the economic development portion of the 1-cent sales tax program and approving the agreement for services with H.W. Lochner Inc.