

Blaine airport facilities serve high-flying RNC guests

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New corporate jet facilities at Anoka County-Blaine Airport are serving a number of high-flying guests visiting the Republican National Convention (RNC). A 14,000 square-foot executive terminal and 80,000 square-foot hangar built by Connecticut-based Key Air LLC opened days prior to the political event.

Key Air LLC recently completed work on this 14,000 square-foot executive terminal and business center at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport. The terminal features flight planning and weather rooms, pilot and passenger lounges and an executive conference room. (Photo by Tim Hennagir)

by Tim Hennagir

Life Editor

New corporate jet facilities at Anoka County-Blaine Airport are serving a number of high-flying guests visiting the Republican National Convention (RNC).

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Brad Kost, Key Air president and chief executive officer, confirmed the new fixed-base operation (FBO) had booked almost 100 convention-related reservations into Blaine.

"These reservations are from corporations throughout the United States that are here for the RNC," he said. "Several Fortune 500 companies are included."

Key Air received its certificate of occupancy Thursday afternoon, Kost said. His employees and other workers scurried Friday to complete finishing touches.

According to Kost, most of Key Air's RNC-related aviation traffic started arriving Friday and became progressively heavier throughout Monday and Tuesday.

"We're also serving a few larger Twin Cities area corporate flight departments that will move aircraft and stage from here during the convention," Kost said.

Key Air has been part of similar high-profile or national events that have a private or corporate aviation component, Kost said during an airport interview.

"We've been involved with Super Bowls," he said. "And, we've done presidential fly-in weekends in Florida that have

featured 400 to 500 aircraft," he said.

Kost said the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) thoroughly analyze local transportation infrastructure.

"They look at the reliever airports and private jet traffic that's expected, because events like political conventions generate a lot of traffic," Kost said.

The Anoka County-Blaine Airport is one of six such airports that serve general aviation and help reduce traffic at Minneapolis-St. Paul International (MSP).

"The security around this convention adds a whole different flavor to what's going on," Kost said. "A lot of the activity is seamless to the American public."

Key Air's on-ramp aircraft service facilities at the Blaine airport have been in a "soft open" mode since the 3M Championship Tournament in July, Kost said.

The hangar built by Circle Pines-based Kraus-Anderson Construction Co. can hold 15 to 20 aircraft, Kost said. Key Air will base three to five aircraft inside.

"We plan to bring more than 250 jobs to Blaine," Kost said. "The majority of those new positions will be pilots, flight attendants and aircraft mechanics."

According to Kost, the Anoka County-Blaine Airport is quickly growing into "true status" as a full reliever airport, and has yet to reach its mature cycle.

"We've put several thousand dollars into marketing studies to address that," he said. "In the future, we'll spend much more than that to market this airport."

Kost said it's important for the corporate aviation community to educate the public about the next generation of jet aircraft and how they will operate locally.

"These are some of the most efficient and quiet planes that have ever flown," Kost said. "These planes get in and out quick. They are high, fast and quiet."

Key Air's new corporate aviation passenger terminal features an on-site business center and conference room that can be used for business executives.

Hertz Car Rental will have a counter inside the new terminal at the airport, but will operate separately with its own

employees and on-site vehicles.

“This facility is what we plan to duplicate throughout the country,” Kost said. “In Florida, the terminal entry won’t feature a fireplace. It will have a fish tank.”

According to Kost, the new corporate jet facilities at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport will soon serve as an important business resource for the community.

“This is a gateway,” he said. “There will be high-level conference meetings at this site that will affect area commerce. Those people arrive via private jets.”

Looking out one of the terminal’s large picture windows to the south, Kost mentioned nearby Medtronic as a prime corporate aviation-related example.

“They are excited about this facility,” Kost said. “This week, company officials came and looked us over. They are proud to have this facility in Blaine.”

Key Air could not accomplished the airport improvements without “tremendous support” from Anoka County and Blaine officials, Kost said.

The terminal and hangar within the Anoka County-Blaine Airport’s 39-acre Northwest Building Area were built in 16 weeks after an April groundbreaking.

Anoka County issued approximately \$20 million in general obligation bonds to finance most of the runway, taxiway and other airport improvements.

As part of its municipal contribution, the city of Blaine owns and operates water and sanitary sewer lines serving the new hangar development area.

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) contributed \$2 million in federal airport improvement program grants and \$450,000 in airport entitlement funds.

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