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THE FEDERAL AVIATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN FLORIDA

A. B. McMULLEN*

In Florida the Federal Airport Development Program has not been confined to airports alone, but has been expanded to include a number of diversified projects designed to aid the advancement of Aviation and to increase the use of airplanes by all classes of people. Any or all of the projects started in this State could be conducted in any other state, many with more success than has been enjoyed in Florida.

The following paragraphs briefly describe some of the projects that have been completed or started by the Aviation Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration of Florida and the methods used to accomplish their completion. It is the hope of the writer that this paper will be only the beginning of a general discussion in this meeting of the methods employed in different states to utilize the funds made available by CWA and FERA for airport construction and aviation projects. For this meeting will not have been a success unless each representative attending returns to his respective state with many new ideas and additional knowledge of how to get the things we are all interested in more efficiently done. This can only be accomplished by a free and open discussion of the methods employed, the difficulties encountered and overcome, etc., by each State Official and Aviation enthusiast present.

Airports:

Ninety-four airport projects have been started in Florida since the inception of FERA. Seventy-one of these are new airports and twenty-three are extensions to existing ports. Nine hundred eighteen thousand five hundred (\$918,500.00) dollars have been spent on Florida airports from CWA and FERA funds, seven hundred fifty-five thousand, six hundred (\$755,600.00) dollars of which went to labor and one hundred sixty-three thousand, nine hundred (\$163,900.00) dollars for materials and equipment hire.

Title in fee simple to the land upon which thirty-eight of these

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new airports are located has been acquired by either a municipality, county or the State. Those owned by the State have been deeded to the Aviation Division of the State Road Department as a gift and many sites now owned by Cities and Counties were deeded to them by patriotic citizens free of cost. Several cities and counties accepted tracts of land from large property owners in payment of delinquent taxes. In some cases property already owned by municipalities was exchanged for other property suitable for an airport. In Melbourne the company that owned the tract selected for an airport was not willing to lease the 160 acres for the rental the city would pay and the city was not in a position to purchase the tract outright. The 160 acres desired for the airport was a part of a 480 acre tract of uncultivated land. Finally a deal was arranged whereby the city leased the entire tract of 480 acres, for a period of ten years at a rental equal to the taxes. The present owners then agreed to deed to the City at the end of the ten year lease, the 160 acres now developed into an airport, in consideration for the taxes having been paid on the remaining 320 acres for the ten years, during the lease.

In Lakeland, Florida, the new airport was constructed on a subdivision that included fifteen or twenty residences, paved streets, power and telephone lines and, of course, hundreds of lots that had been sold to individuals, now living in all parts of the United States. Acquiring clear title to this property involved some of the highest powered horsetrading I have ever witnessed. However, title to the property was acquired, the land cleared, leveled, and the airport constructed, including paved runways, administration building, restaurant, beacon and lights in less than six months' time.

Before an airport project is approved by the FERA Aviation Department in Florida, the site must either be owned, or leased for a minimum of ten years, with option to purchase at a reasonable price, by some political subdivision of the United States or the State.

The average rental paid for leased land is an amount equal to all taxes on the property for the duration of the lease.

A bill will be introduced in the 1935 Session of the Florida Legislature authorizing the cancellation of all State Taxes on land publicly leased for airport purposes. If this Bill is passed, cities and counties who simply pay the taxes for use of the land will, of course, receive their airport rents free.

By constant plugging we have secured enough labor from

FERA to keep all our airport projects alive during the summer months. About two months ago an appropriation of eighty-seven thousand (\$87,000.00) dollars for materials was received, and with this money we will be able to complete between forty and fifty of our small projects.

We have two transient labor camps working full time on airports and several more are being organized. These camps consist of 200 men each and they are equipped with mobile camp equipment including tents, field kitchens, etc., the same as a military organization, and what additional equipment they need to build an airport including trucks, a tractor, and all necessary small tools. However, the Transient Bureau has just notified us that in the future they will not be able to buy tractors for their new camps from Transient Bureau funds. The men in these transient camps have done more work per man hour than any group of men I have ever seen, including contract labor. They must enlist for a period of six weeks before they are assigned to an airport camp and until recently they were paid \$3.00 per week, \$2.00 per week of which was retained as a bonus until they had fully completed their period of enlistment.

However, the Washington office has recently disapproved the payment of the bonus and the men now receive \$1.00 per week with no bonus. These men are worked five hours per day, five days per week. Due partly to the management and partly to the careful selection of the camp sites near lakes, where the men can fish and swim, the esprit de corps in these camps is very high and very few men leave before their enlistment has expired. They take a lot of pride in their work, due I believe to the airport project being entirely their own from beginning to end, and something they can point to as their job, when it is completed.

Clearing of land in Florida is a difficult thing, due to the dense growth of Palmetto that prevails in most sections of the state in addition to trees and semi-tropical undergrowth of every description. On some fields the clearing has run as high as \$300.00 per acre, where no equipment was available. Due to the level terrain, very little grading is necessary, but for the same reason our drainage problems are difficult and more grading has to be done to fill low places than to cut off high spots.

Equipment and material has, of course, been very hard to get, due to lack of funds for these items, and every conceivable method has been employed to secure trucks and tractors, for without

equipment of this kind, few of our projects would ever be completely finished. Several cities have been allowing citizens to work out delinquent taxes with trucks and tractors used on airport construction. The FERA Aviation Division has recently purchased several trucks and tractors with money appropriated for equipment hire. We have found that equipment of this kind can be purchased and operated for less than it can be rented for.

Each airport when completed is fenced, and equipped with regulation size wind direction indicator, a 100 foot circle of either lime rock or concrete, and in many cases the name of the airport, in 20 foot letters made of rock or concrete, is placed on some portion of the field that is not apt to be frequently used.

In addition each port is supplied with galvanized iron boundary markers placed 300 feet apart and erected eighteen inches above the ground on iron posts to permit mowing under the cones.

At first we purchased these boundary markers on the open market, paying approximately \$6.00 each for them. Recently we have made arrangements with the State Road Department to use their sheet metal shop, at Gainesville, for the manufacture of these cones. FERA and transient labor will be used to fabricate these markers and the materials when purchased for lots of one thousand at a time, is costing us less than \$1.50 per marker, including the iron pipe used to mount the cones on.

Considerable time and effort has been spent not only to beautify our airports but to make them recreational or community centers. Golf courses have been built on or in connection with several of our new ports and several existing golf courses have been re-designed and rebuilt to accommodate two or more landing strips for airplanes. Swimming pools and baseball diamonds have been built in connection with several other airport projects. Nurseries have been started on several ports where water is available and a regular attendant is employed. Seeds, cuttings, etc., to start these nurseries are supplied by Garden Clubs, Chambers of Commerce and local citizens. We started these nurseries when numerous beautification projects now in progress throughout the state boosted the price of nursery stock to where the nurseries have almost stopped donating palms and shrubs, etc., to our airport projects and have started quoting us prices that FERA cannot afford to pay. Very little of our beautification work is visible to the casual observer at the present time, but within a few years we hope this work will transform our airports into airparks.

Air Marking Project:

In order that our airports might be easily located both from the air and from the ground, a project was initiated under CWA for painting roof signs on approximately 750 buildings to direct aerial traffic throughout the State, and the erection of numerous roadside directional markers along the highways, for directing automobile traffic. At towns where airports are available we are painting the name of the town, with meridian and airport markers showing the distance and direction to the airport, while at towns where no airport is available locally, the name of the town and meridian marker is shown with one or two directional arrows giving the direction, distance and name of the nearest towns having airports. These directional arrows indicate the easiest route to follow in bad weather, usually parallel to a railroad or paved highway. To accomplish this, 7,000 gallons of paint were purchased just before CWA closed down, and stored at the State Road Department Maintenance Depots throughout the State. This paint was manufactured to SRD specifications under the supervision of their chief chemist. Immediately after the paint was received, a State FERA project was approved to do the painting.

At the inception of this program six paint crews were organized with a Master Sign Painter in charge of each crew. Each crew chief or master painter is paid \$30.00 per week and \$3.00 per diem, and is allowed 4c per mile for his truck or car, but his mileage must not exceed fifty miles per sign.

At first, the labor to assist these crew chiefs was drawn from local FERA Offices, but this entailed so much red tape and loss of time, and the labor was often of so little value as painters that some of our crew chiefs decided they could work faster alone and would actually lay out their own signs by attaching a fish hook to one end of their snap line, then fastening this hook into the roof to hold one end of the line while laying out the sign.

We have now reduced the paint force to three crews and have given each crew chief a permanent helper, who is paid \$20.00 per week and \$3.00 per diem from the State Office, and production has been increased approximately 40% over that secured by using local relief labor as helpers.

Approximately 250 signs have been completed to date, at an average cost of \$40.78 per sign or approximately 50% less than we originally estimated the cost would be. An average of 6 gallons of paint per sign was used on the 250 signs already painted.

To secure the necessary roofs for these signs a letter was sent to every Mayor in the State, asking him to secure three large roofs in or near his town, one of which we could select to paint an aerial sign on, that would advertise his city, and aid the development of Aviation. Special forms for owners to sign granting permission to use their roofs were enclosed with the letter. By this method we secured several hundred buildings and several weeks later we circularized all postmasters in the same manner and they secured permission to use a larger number of roofs than the mayors had secured for us, due perhaps to the fact that many small towns do not have Mayors, but all have postmasters.

In order to direct the attention of automobile travelers to our airports and to aid these travelers in finding the ports when they are off the main highways, 3200 directional markers have been manufactured on a state project. These markers include an 8 inch by 36 inch board sign giving the name of the airport, which is placed at the entrance to the port, and half a mile each way from each entrance the same sized signs are placed, calling attention to the traveler that Blank Airport is one-half mile ahead. From 10 to 40 direction arrows are then placed throughout the towns and at all crossroads and intersections leading to the airport. All these signs are painted International Orange and White with the posts striped with eight inch bands of the same colors. Signs and posts are then varnished to preserve the paint. Painting and wood-working on these signs and posts was done in a shop loaned by the City of Jacksonville and all labor was supplied by FERA or the Transient Bureau.

These signs are distributed by one of our own trucks. The truck driver is in charge of their erection and he draws the necessary labor to assist him from the airport or some other FERA project in each town.

Aviation Map Project:

Approximately a year ago the Aviation Division of the State Road Department published an Airways Map of Florida; the supply of these maps is almost exhausted and drawings for a new map are being prepared by draftsmen employed by FERA. This new map will be a replica of the original with the exception of several improvements, such as larger and more legible type, all piers and other prominent landmarks along the coastline will be shown, the highways will be more complete and accurate, and, of

course, the airport and airway information will be brought up to date.

After the engineering and drafting work has been completed by FERA, the map will be printed from funds supplied by the Aviation Division of the State Road Department.

This map has been used extensively in interesting cities in developing new and better airports. This was done by calling attention to the advertising which the cities having airports would receive from the map, and the business they might expect to get from flyers following the State Airways as shown on the map.

Glider Project:

This project is just getting under way, and was instituted for two purposes. First, to place trained Aviation Mechanics, Engineers and Pilots, who were unemployed and relief clients, in their own line of work rather than digging ditches, cutting weeds, or some similar FERA job.

Second, to create an interest in flying and to attract people to our new airports, many of which do not have planes operating from them regularly at the present time.

To start this project, we have secured the services of a graduate aeronautical engineer, who was transferred from a FERA survey party, a glider expert, who is a resident of Jacksonville and a good draftsman. At the present time these men are designing a new two-place glider using a wing that has already been developed and approved by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

As soon as the design is completed, actual construction will start, using Aviation Mechanics who are eligible for relief work.

When a successful glider has been produced and production started, we propose to conduct a glider school for unemployed heavier-than-air pilots and the graduates of this school will then be used to organize and conduct glider schools or clubs, throughout the State on a non-profit, but self-supporting basis, under the direct control of the State Aviation Department. As planned at present, the gliders will be of an Amphibian Type, or adapted to water flying in order that they may be towed behind motor boats along Florida's hundreds of miles of coast line and on its many inland lakes and rivers, as well as towed by car from the beaches and airports. It is estimated that the materials for these gliders will not cost in excess of \$350.00 each.

This project has been enthusiastically approved by the heads of the educational and vocational departments of the State FERA. It is possible that if this project is successful and we secure the right type of men during the process of developing and building these gliders, an attempt will be made to develop a desirable light plane that can be manufactured at a low cost.

Through the efforts of our Aviation Department the Vocational Department of FERA are making plans to include a fully accredited Aviation Ground School in connection with their other vocational projects, and a study is now being made to determine the advisability of sponsoring several flying clubs, FERA to assist in supplying the equipment, but the clubs to be partly self-liquidating by charging the students or members a small tuition or membership fee.

Administration and Organization:

Although both the Florida State Road Department and the State Emergency Relief Administration, have a distinct Aviation Department, these two organizations have been combined for administrative purposes and all aviation activities in the State are supervised by the State Director of Aviation, who maintains offices in Tallahassee, the State Capitol, and at Jacksonville, the State Headquarters of FERA.

Some of the employees on the administrative staff are paid by the State and some by FERA. This staff consists of:

State Director of Aviation	5 Division Airport Supervisors
Executive Officer	Draftsman
Airmarking Supervisor	File Clerk
Beautification Supervisor	3 Stenographers
Statistician	Supervisor of Glider Project

In addition to supervising the actual construction work now in progress, this staff is used to compile data and statistics that will be of great value in future planning. They also assist other departments especially the local operation directors and clerks in the field offices, in working up and keeping proper records on our projects.

The members of the administrative staff of the Aviation Department voluntarily work on an average of one hour a day longer than other FERA and State employees, and only by long hours of hard work have they secured from FERA and CWA the labor

and funds needed to carry on the airport and other aviation projects it has started.

Conclusion:

Unless all states immediately initiate an active program to construct airports and otherwise assist the development of aviation, the money spent by states who do carry out such a program will not be entirely justified, for Aviation will not advance very far as a state proposition, and only as a Nation with each state doing its part can we fill the skies with airplanes and regulate their use so that flying will be reasonably safe, and the maximum benefit and pleasure derived by those who use the airplane as a means of transportation and recreation.