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## SI Airport looks at further development

OCTOBER 17, 2013 12:00 AM • BY DUSTIN DUNCAN,  
THE SOUTHERN

**CARBONDALE** — The Southern Illinois Airport Authority has brought in a consulting firm to enhance the well-being of the Southern Illinois Airport and the communities that it serves.

Aaron Gruen and Debra Jeans of Gruen Gruen + Associates from Chicago presented its development plan and recommendations for the Southern Illinois Airport property to the authority Wednesday at the

Transportation Education Center at the Southern Illinois Airport.

The presentation included the idea of improving transportation to and from the airport.

“In marketing the property, we emphasized the competitive advantages for the land, which include accessibility to important roads such as I-57 and low land and labor costs, and the present of SIU in control of land by the airport,” Jeans said.

Gruen recommends relocating, realigning and reconstructing portions of the airport, including improving access to U.S. 51 and Illinois 13 in order to provide ample traffic capacity and better access.

Gruen also talked about investigating sources of state grants, incentives, and financing, which would most likely require adding at 20,000 square feet of hangar space to appeal to a wide range of potential users and compete with other airports in Illinois and St. Louis.

The firm said the airport should think about ways to attract more activity at the airport as well.

“To attract and support aviation and automotive related start-up businesses and more intense use of the research

facilities, an “On the Field” applied research and developmental center and offer use of facilities, space, and available land,” Jeans said in Gruen’s presentation. “This will require collaboration of facility, students, industry advisors, and policy makers.”

A continuing theme in Gruen’s presentation is that it will take an integrated and coordinated effort by local municipal and county economic bodies to promote the



development of the airport.

The consulting firm suggested the organizations involved should create a cohesive website, choose a name for the project, create a formal property listing on commercial real estate websites and employ other marketing tools in order to gain support for the development.

“Collectively, the cost of the entire project will cost around \$8 million with all the different components involved,” said Aaron Gruen.

dustin.duncan@thesouthern.com

618-351-5823