

# West Star Aviation Breaks Ground on New Hangar at STL Regional Airport

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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EAST ALTON - West Star Aviation broke ground on a new hangar today at the St. Louis Regional Airport.

Hangar 67 will be completed in April 2024. West Star Aviation, an aircraft maintenance company, already has a facility at the St. Louis Regional Airport, but this new hangar

will expand its facility to over 500,000 square feet. Contegra Construction has partnered with West Star on the project.

“For us, this signifies more than just a couple of new buildings that we’re going to build around here. It’s the realization of our vision for growth and our vision for reinvesting in West Star Aviation,” Mike Zada, Vice President of Project Management at West Star Aviation, said. “We’re extremely proud to be a part of this community.”

Brian Bauwens, the general manager of the East Alton facility, explained that the expansion will include the 40,000-square-foot Hangar 67 and additional back shop space, which will house offices and storage. The airport’s current largest hangar will also be expanded to include a new sheet metal shop, avionics shop and storage. Bauwens said these expansions will require 60–80 skilled workers, to be hired at premium wages.

“We’re looking at different vendors to partner with for training and teaching the local workforce as they come out of high school, just looking for that placement so we can get them in the job role,” Bauwens added.

Bauwens and Airport Director Danny Adams began discussing plans for the hangar about a year ago. Adams noted that the airport has a \$480 million economic impact on the East Alton and Bethalto communities, and he said this will increase with the expansion.

“Here we are a year later, ready to break ground on a new hangar and additional shop space,” Adams said. “West Star had a very aggressive timeline. The airport was required to match that very aggressive timeline. great support from the Airport Board and the commissioners in doing that.”

Several local leaders were also in attendance. State Senator Erica Harriss (56th District) and State Representative Amy Elik (111th District) both thanked West Star Aviation for its involvement in the region. Elik added that she hopes to be back next year for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“This investment in our district really signifies the immense value in our community and jobs that will be coming to our area and the promising future that lies ahead,” Harriss said. “As you all know, the aviation industry plays a vital role in our seat’s economy. This new hangar marks a significant milestone in its growth by expanding our aviation infrastructure and creating opportunities for economic development, job creation and increased connectivity for our region.”

As several West Star and airport representatives prepared their shovels for the groundbreaking, Bethalto Mayor Gary Bost stepped up to the podium and reiterated his gratitude for West Star's choice to expand the East Alton/Bethalto location.

“And Brian, as soon as your hangar fills up, pick another piece of ground and we'll have another groundbreaking,” Bost told Bauwens, which elicited laughter from the crowd.

Hangar 67 is expected to be completed in April 2024.