



Appleton International Airport wins state economic award

Airport tops in state for Economic Development Initiatives

(APPLETON, WIS.) Sept. 17, 2026— Appleton International Airport won top honors in the Community and Economic Development Awards (CEDA) from the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) in the economic development category. The awards recognize innovation in community and economic development that promotes economic growth within communities and regions. The awards were given in categories of business retention and expansion, economic development, real estate development, and talent attraction and retention and presented at the association's fall meeting on Sept. 17, 2026.

The airport's terminal expansion and renovation project was recognized for incorporating sustainable materials and facility upgrades in the expansion, technology innovations, and engaging regional entrepreneurs in creating a space for business growth. The \$92 million project was funded by a combination of state, federal, and regional grants, and budgeted dollars. Significant dollars were gained through \$46.9 million in federal grants and support from congressional representatives and the State of Wisconsin.

"Our goals in this project were to connect the Fox Cities to the world through a facility that provides universal access, environmental stewardship, technological innovation, and showcases regional entrepreneurs and products," said Airport Director Abe Weber. "Along the way, we created amenities and features driven by traveler input all to make air travel faster, easier and more convenient."

Weber credited support from community leaders, the Outagamie County Board, and state and federal legislators in supporting strategic development of the terminal and property surrounding the airport.

"A study conducted in 2025 showed the airport has a total economic impact of nearly \$2 billion which has a multiplier effect on the Northeast Wisconsin region," said Outagamie County Executive Thomas Nelson. "We now welcome more than 1-million visitors annually and expect that number will continue to grow as a result of our investment into the terminal and surrounding business parks."

A key element in constructing the new concourse was raising the elevation from the existing concourse by nine feet to accommodate airlines flying larger planes.

"Our airline partners wanted to fly larger planes on expanded routes which means travelers flying out of Appleton now have more options," Weber said. "With 22 nonstop routes and connections to major hubs we like to say you can get anywhere in the world from Northeast Wisconsin." Appleton International Airport is served by Delta, American, and United and is the only Allegiant base in the state of Wisconsin.

Miron Construction Company and architects Mead & Hunt, Inc. guided the airport through sustainable design and operational enhancements. Sustainable materials such as native stone and timber in ceilings, planters, walls, and walkways were used. The terminal uses a chilled beam conditioning system, solar energy roof panels, and occupancy sensors for lighting and mechanical systems.

“Before we started renovation, we asked travelers for input on amenities that would make air travel easier for them,” Weber said. “As a result, we have a sensory room for neurodivergent travelers, a meditation space, our gates are equipped with hearing loops, and we expanded our Express services.” Appleton’s Express services include Express Parking, Express Bag Check for curbside bag check, and even free Express Coat Check that allows travelers to leave winter coats behind when traveling to warmer destinations.

One of the goals in the project was to create a welcoming place for the region and provide opportunities for regional business growth. The Supple Restaurant Group based in Oshkosh, Wis. was tapped to open Fratellos Craft Kitchen & Bar @ ATW in the new concourse. The airport partnered with Appleton based Copper Rock Coffee Company to open Grain & Grind Coffee & Deli featuring their coffee products.

Nominated projects were screened and selected by an impartial panel of judges comprised of WEDA members and partners. The independent panel reviewed many projects that were submitted for consideration, but 12 finalists were ultimately selected based on the significant economic impact each project has on its respective community or region.

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About Appleton International Airport

[Appleton International Airport](#) connects our community to the world through American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, and Allegiant Air. In addition to offering nonstop service to 22 destinations, Appleton Airport connects to 13 major international airport hubs from which travelers can fly to almost anywhere in the world. Using Appleton Airport, travelers can safely and more conveniently get to their destination and home again, leaving them more time for what really matters. Appleton International Airport is the third largest airport in Wisconsin according to arrivals and departures. Visit atwairport.com to learn more.