



# THE TAOS NEWS

Best U.S. Weekly Paper- NNA 2007, 2008, 2010  
Inland Press Nation's Best Weekly Newspaper 2009

## Dirt moving at Taos airport

By J.R. Logan [jrlogan@taosnews.com](mailto:jrlogan@taosnews.com)

*The Taos News*, 6/23/2016

Construction at the Taos Regional Airport is in full swing, with crews blasting, crushing and compacting rock to build the base of a second runway — this one crosswind.

Dirt work at the site began last year after decades of contentious debate and several lawsuits that sought to derail the project.

The \$24 million expansion is being paid for almost entirely with a federal grant.

Supporters of the expansion argue it will improve safety and better position the town for economic development. Opponents contend the new runway will increase pollution, be a blight on the surrounding neighborhood and only benefit the wealthy.

The airport is owned and operated by the town of Taos government.

This week, the Taos Town Council toured the new runway. Francisco “French” Espinoza, public works director, said this phase of the project was 7 percent complete and about a week behind schedule.

Part of the delay is related to the unforeseen need to blast outcroppings of basalt to get the runway to grade.

In April, the town announced that explosives experts had been hired to break up the rock.

During the tour, town employees pointed to equipment and areas where blasting had been done.

The runway is being built on shallow, undulating hills. Earth movers have had to dig down on high points and fill in low points.

Much of the rock that was blasted free is being crushed on-site to be used as fill material. Road graders equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) are leveling the rough grade to fractions of an inch, Espinoza said.

The project contract stipulates that the runway be complete by mid-December.



Rock blasting is underway at the Taos Regional Airport. Large boulders are crushed to a uniform size and reused.

Katharine Egli

---

Copyright (c)2016 The Taos News 6/23/2016

Powered by TECNAVIA