

# The Commercial Appeal

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## Airport parking tight until 2010

*Cargo tenants' lots used in the interim*

By Jane Roberts

If you've tried parking at the airport early on Mondays you know the desperation of need.

Life will be easier in 2010, when the airport finishes a 3,800-space parking garage. But starting late this year, the situation is going to get tighter because construction of the \$40 million garage is expected to eliminate all 900 spots in lots A and B.

To help, the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority Thursday approved construction of several storage facilities on Louis Carruthers, allowing it to relocate cargo tenants in two buildings on the east side of the airport and use those lots for temporary parking.

"If we try to provide temporary parking off site, we could use the northeast corner of Winchester and Plough, but that would require a lot of busing and is not as convenient to passengers," said Robert Beesley, director of development. "The other option is do nothing and suffer the loss of revenue. The third-party airport parking vendors would pick up the slack."

The Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority earned \$14.1 million from parking fees in 2007, or 8 percent of its total budget.

By building temporary facilities, it has the opportunity to retain on-campus parking plus give tenant Northwest Airlines storage facilities better suited to its needs.

**The board voted to renovate and add 8,000 square feet to a building south of the fuel farm. It awarded a contract not to exceed \$1.3 million to Grinder-Haizlip.**

It also approved construction of a 20,000-square-foot building, south of the post office on Louis Carruthers. The board awarded a contract not to exceed \$2.3 million to Standard Builders.

"Ideally, we want them to be built no later than August so we have time to move the tenants, do the demolition and have the parking available when we start construction of the parking garage," Beesley said.

Garage construction is expected to start in November. By December, long-term parking in Lots A and B will be limited.

The garage, in design stages now, will be built in two phases, based on airport traffic. The first phase, a \$70 million project, will take up to two years to complete and will include a covered, moving walkway through what is now the parking garage exit plaza.

The walkway will connect passengers to the tunnel under the road in front of the terminal.

Phase 2, which will attach to Phase 1, will provide an additional 2,500 spaces.