King County International Airport marks 75 years of aviation excellence as historic terminal reopens

King County International Airport (Boeing Field), known as the "birthplace of modern aviation," marked its 75th anniversary on September 26th and 27th with a grand re-opening of its historic terminal building.

"In 1928, when voters were asked to approve $500,000 dollars to build the airport, a resounding 86 percent of the voters said 'yes, build it,'" said Ron Sims, King County Executive. "The airport has proven over the years to be a great public investment and an important economic catalyst."

Originally built in 1930, it's the oldest passenger terminal in the Puget Sound area and serves regional commercial airlines and passengers, along with charter flights and private pilots. The new terminal includes upgrades for Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Immigration, as well as energy, seismic and fire safety improvements.

"We had to gut the old terminal building to bring it up to code and we used environmentally friendly and recycled products wherever possible in the remodeling process," said Bob Burke, King County International Airport Director." At the same time we worked to retain the building's historic charm, by restoring the front entrance, the skylights and other features that link the past and present." The building was closed for more than a year while the renovation took place.

The airport attracted an estimated 50,000 people to its opening ceremonies and dedication in 1928. The airport opening ushered in a new era of transportation in the Northwest, bringing regular airmail delivery and allowing commercial passengers to fly from coast to coast in only 28 hours. In the past 75 years, it has been at the center of Northwest aviation history.

Following the re-opening of the terminal building, the airport held a two-day Open House that attracted an estimated 2,000 aviation enthusiasts. Two vintage Metro transit buses stood watch as attendees entered the building. Parked airside on the field were a half-dozen aircraft from the 1930s and '40s on display. Among them was the twin-engine Boeing 247D, regarded as the first commercial airliner. The plane carried 10 passengers at a top speed of 189 mph. When it rolled off the line in 1933, a newspaper reporter said that the 247 was likely to be the largest passenger plane that would ever be built because "it's unlikely that more than 10 people would want to travel between two cities at a time."

On hand to help King County Executive Ron Sims and Council members Pete von Reichbauer and Dow Constantine cut the ribbon re-opening the upgraded facility were four veteran aviators all over 90 years old and active at Boeing Field from the very beginning. Icons in both local and national aviation circles, Clayton Scott, Bob Ellis, Glenn Jones, and Elmer Hansen all spoke of their early flying exploits and lifetimes spent creating aviation history. With the renovated facility, Boeing Field stands ready to make new history and face the next 75 years ahead.