

SEC-AAAE

Special Thanks!

Special thanks go out to Frank Miller and the 2004 Annual Conference Committee for one of the most fantastic SEC-AAAE Annual Conferences in recent history. If you missed the Pensacola extravaganza, you really missed an outstanding event. The weather, the beach, the programs and the fellowship could not be beat. Thanks, Frank!

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Nash Named to fill in as Airport Head

Michael Nash, a former airport executive director, will serve as an outside consultant to the Moore County Airport, North Carolina, until the authority hires a new manager.

The authority recently voted unanimously to offer a contract to Nash who will work in the capacity of airport manager until a permanent replacement is hired.

Michael Shouse resigned May 31, 2004, as executive director

of the airport authority. He had already left the job using sick leave and vacation until the end of May.

The authority plans to change the job title to airport manager and hire someone at \$15,000 to \$20,000 less than Shouse's \$65,000 annual salary.

Nash also agreed to serve in Shouse's capacity as a volunteer member of the task force that is working to recruit

service for the airport.

Bob Hawkins, a member of the task force described Shouse as the "quarterback" of the force. He added that he hoped Shouse would meet with the group, share his files and allow them to "pick his brains" about the prospects of getting air service started.

The Moore County Airport has lacked commercial air service for two years.

Airport Thief Receives Suspended Sentence

A Booneville woman who stole more than \$26,000 from the Fort Smith Regional Airport pled guilty to four felony counts thereby avoiding a prison sentence.

Lisa Gail Wilson, 33, a former administrative assis-

tant at the airport pled guilty to theft by deception, fraudulent use of a credit card, criminal possession of a forgery device and second degree forgery.

Wilson received a 10-year suspended sentence on each count, to run concur-

rently, and was ordered to pay the airport more than \$30,000 in restitution at the rate of \$220 per month. The restitution includes more than \$3,000 the airport paid for an audit to reveal the extent of Wilson's theft.

Big Iron Uses Ocala—Officials Consider Tax

Heavy aircraft are using the Ocala International Airport so frequently they are wearing out the runway and causing maintenance costs to soar, according to city officials. To address the problem, the airport has a not-so-popular solution—landing fees.

Airport Director Bob Pruitt is proposing to charge a \$750 landing fee for planes landing on the field that weigh more than 100,000 pounds—such as horse carrying DC-9's—in an effort to defray the expenses associated with repairing the “wear and tear” of the pavement.

“During the past we have seen a dramatic increase in activity of horse transport aircraft, which is one of the reasons we just completed a surface sealing program on the ramps due

to its rapid deterioration,” Pruitt said. “While this increased activity is good for the airport, this type of traffic creates a lot of wear and tear on our pavement which is costly to repair.”

Pruitt estimates the fee would generate a minimum of \$18,000 for the airport, a department in the city that historically struggles to bring in revenue. Recently the airport completed a \$300,000 project to resurface all of its aprons and taxiways, Pruitt said.

“This resurfacing is supposed to last us 20 years. It's been three weeks and these planes have already damaged the surface,” he added. “It's critical to the operation of the airport to institute this type of fee to support and maintain the infrastructure. We need this flow of money to keep up with the

damage that's done to the pavement.”

Those that would be most impacted by the fee, such as the transport carriers using the airport, are not thrilled about the proposed fee.

Paul Holthus, general manager of H.E. “Tex” Sutton Forwarding Company, one of the major horse aircraft carriers, said the company probably lands at Ocala at least 27 times a year. He said they may have to look at landing at Gainesville Regional Airport, which charges \$1.09 per 1,000 pounds gross landing weight for commercial carriers with an operating agreement at the airport. Holthus says that although landing fees are typical, \$750 per aircraft is “pretty high up on the scale.”

Naples Airport Wins Round in Court over Stage 2 Ban

An appellate court has sided with the Naples Airport Authority in a case in which a tenant sued the authority to once again operate his Stage 2 charter jet out of Naples Regional Airport.

Continental operates the jet service from a han-

gar it leases from the airport authority. Their primary charter jet is a older Gulfstream classified as a Stage 2 aircraft and it is noisier than newer models. But since May 2002, the company has not been able to fly its jet out of Naples due to the authority's Stage 2 jet ban

that has landed the authority in a legal battle with the Federal Aviation Administration.

Continental owner James Lennane sued the authority in July 2002, seeking an injunction on the authority's resolution that established the Stage 2

ban.

The suit argued that the resolution was an invalid zoning ordinance under state law. The appellate court disagreed.

Lennane says he is now forced to take on the authority in a trial over damages his business has suffered.

Dogfight at Virginia Region's Airports

Jacque Shuck and Mark Courtney used to work together—twice no less. They first worked together at the Cleveland Airport in Ohio and when Shuck became executive director at Roanoke Regional Airport, it wasn't long before she brought Courtney to Roanoke, Virginia, to serve as her assistant. A few years later Courtney went up the road about 50 miles to become manager of the Lynchburg Regional Airport and now the competitive zeal between the two major airports in the Blue Ridge Region has intensified and the primary winner is the air traveler.

In terms of economic impact, they have it. A recent report from the Virginia Department of Aviation estimates Roanoke Regional Airport's total wallop at \$252.7 million, with Lynchburg Regional Airport providing \$68.5 million.

The figures were derived from the direct economic activity generated by airlines, aircraft maintenance, restaurants, hotels and other multipliers along with the indirect ripple effect of this activity throughout the local economy.

Furthermore, an infrastructure improvement, such as a runway extension, has the potential to create additional impact. Lynchburg Regional Airport has received federal approval to add 1,300 feet to its primary runway. With this future extension, Courtney says, "We see an opportunity to recruit an air freight carrier and to attract larger passenger carriers." Courtney says the length of the current runway constrains the size of the aircraft that can use the runway.

Runway extensions and other improvement require an important ingredient: land. "We could use more acreage—we have no place to grow," Says Jacque Shuck, executive director of the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission. "We have to tear down something and rebuild over it."

In April, Senator George Allen announced a \$450,000 Federal Aviation Administration grant to Roanoke Regional Airport to update the existing airport layout plan and identify future development projects. In May, the FAA awarded millions more for 17 Virginia airports, including \$945,000 for Lynchburg Regional to be used for programmed construction, rehabilitation or safety improvements. Also in May, Congressman Bob Goodlatte announced \$9.7 million in grant money from the Department of Transportation to assist Roanoke in repaving and making safety improvements to one of its runways.

Phil Sparks, executive director of the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership cites what he considers a serious misconception: high fares. "If you compare our service with Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh or Dulles, more often than not we are very competitive." He says the area is well served, with nine nonstop connections to places like Atlanta, Charlotte, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, New York, Cincinnati, Chicago and Washington D.C. One reason for this good service, he says, is that the Roanoke market is unique. "We are the largest urban area between Richmond and Knoxville and between Greensboro and Charleston, West Virginia."

Lynchburg's airport suffered devastating losses of service after 9-11, losing five flights to Dulles and 47 percent of their available seats. In response, the business community and local governments rallied together as the "Air Service Development Partnership" to find ways to restore service.

In the past year, Lynchburg Regional Airport has come back in a big way. The Partnership raised \$100,000 in matching funds to support the airport's chances of winning a federal grant to improve air service. Lynchburg won a \$500,000 grant, used as a revenue guarantee to negotiate with Delta Airlines to return its jet service to the airport.

Furthermore, says Courtney, "Through market research, we convinced Delta to lower fares" last year to match those offered at Roanoke Regional Airport. Fares dropped an average of 12 percent and the resulting rise in passenger traffic increased revenues substantially.

And in May, USAirways started using larger aircraft, providing Lynchburg with 102 more departure seats per day. With this change, says Courtney, Lynchburg has recovered to 91% of its pre-9-11 seat capacity.

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Jobs Open and Close at Nashville

Amy Armstong has announced the availability of a Controller position at Nashville International Airport. The position requires a Bachelors degree in accounting, finance or business administration and a CPA accreditation is required. A Masters of Business Administration is preferred. See the Nashville website at www.flynashville.com for additional information.

In other news, former SAMA-SEC/AAAE president Montofrd O. Burgess, Jr., A.A.E., has been selected as the new Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer effective July 1, 2004. Burgess has served the airport for the past two years as VP of Operations and Maintenance.

SEC-AAAE President-Elect Attacks Peak Pricing

Many small communities oppose peak-pricing plans as a method to control congestion, Bryan Elliott, executive director of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport Authority, Va., told the House Transportation Aviation Subcommittee in a recent written testimony. Elliott was permitted to submit comments for the record at his request in response to a brief comment at a hearing by FAA Administrator Marion Blakey that the agency was considering pricing methods as one way to handle congestion of the type seen at LaGuardia. Elliott's airport currently has non-stop service to LaGuardia. In his 8-page document, Elliott cited a number of objections by smaller communities to peak pricing. For example, he said, such an approach would reduce their service to major airports because per-passenger costs would rise. And airport exemptions for small community flights—a feature of Logan's plan with points chosen by Massport—could be "politically determined." Elliott wrote that small communities must receive exemptions or be barred from nonstop access. "However, such exemptions must be determined by the FAA and not airport proprietors." Elliott cited airline deregulation law prohibiting airports and state and local governments from regulating routes, fares and services.

Independence Air Brings Low Fares to Charleston, SC, as Mercury Air Expands

Independence Air will begin service in Charleston, SC, on July 17. Bill Settlemyer, chairman of the Metro Chamber's Air Service Task Force says that following many years of suffering the indignity and economic cost of exorbitant airfares, "we're about to get some relief."

According to Settlemyer, "I received a call from Rick Delisi, the airline's director of corporate communications last November. He introduced himself and said his company had been following

our efforts to attract a low fare carrier to the Charleston region." Delisi said, "We can tell you are a community that 'gets it,'" and he hinted that there would be good news for Charleston when the carrier announced its schedule.

And at about the same time, Mercury Air Centers, Inc., was completing the second of two hangars for privately owned aircraft at Charleston International. The 45,000-square-foot building located close to Mercury's first hangar and terminal, cost \$3.5 million.

"We look at this not as a structure but as building an image," said company veteran John Enticknap, who was recently promoted to president of Atlanta-based Mercury Air.

Mercury Air and other officials snipped the ribbon to the airport's newest addition just as demolition crews were razing the unsightly 40-year-old hangars it replaced. Those buildings were basically falling apart and were considered a safety hazard because they were located too close to a runway.