

# SEC JOURNAL

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## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

We know it goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway. The Officers and Directors of the Southeast Chapter wish you and yours the happiest of holiday seasons.

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## CEO SAYS USAIRWAYS JOBS TO STAY IN CHARLOTTE

Doug Parker, Chief Executive Officer of USAirways Group, Inc., says the newly merged airline will keep its employment in Charlotte at just over 5,000 workers.

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Parker said the number of flights from Charlotte/Douglas International Airport—the airline's largest hub—also will not change. "You might see one-off increases, but there will be no major increases or decreases" in the Charlotte flight schedule, Parker told the Chamber audience of more than 140. "This is the largest source of operations for our airline, and it will continue to be the largest source of operations."

Mayor Pat McCrory called Parker's remarks "nothing but positive news for Charlotte."

After the breakfast, McCrory said local leaders had been assured the September merger of USAirways and America West Group Holdings Corporation would be beneficial for the Queen City. But he said this was the most definite word Parker has given on holding on to Charlotte jobs. "In a time when the industry is cutting back,

staying where we are is very good news."

The merged airline (NYSE:LCC) adopted the USAirways name and based its headquarters in Tempe, Arizona.

Parker says he sees no local airline growth for now. It will be a year before the merged airline can begin to consider whether expansion would be warranted in Charlotte.

Parker added almost 2,500 of USAirways' workers in Charlotte are pilots or flight attendants and they will remain in place. The remainder are maintenance or service workers. He said these jobs would remain at the same level as well.

Charlotte's fares, some of the highest in the industry, also are likely to remain at their current levels. During a question-and-answer period, Parker was asked if he could ever see a time when Charlotte fares might be more competitive.

Parker didn't miss a beat in responding, "They are competitive. They are just higher than you might want them to be."

He told the audience USAirways flies to many small cities from Charlotte, and the low volume of passengers on those flights requires higher fares. "So some fares will look high," he said. "We just can't justify flying to some of those smaller markets without full compensation."

Parker said local travelers will see simplification of fares—a trademark of America West, which he headed until it bought USAirways for \$1.5 billion.

"I think you will see reasonable prices," he told the chamber audience. "We can't change more than what others would change, or a low-cost carrier will come in and take the business.

Parker also didn't hesitate when Chamber of Commerce President Bob Morgan asked what local businesses could do for USAirways.

"Help people understand how taxed our business is," he said. "People don't realize that 28% of what you pay for a ticket goes to the U. S. Government...that is a higher rate than for tobacco or alcohol. We are taxed like a vice for goodness sake."

**MEDIA ALERT:** A Tampa, Florida, newspaper reporter is challenging his peers to investigate free parking by politicians and select business people at airports across the country.

## MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL AIRPORT HIT WITH 27 CITATIONS BY FEDS

The Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration have noted 27 citations—including some security concerns—at the Middle Georgia Regional Airport, director George Brown recently stated.

Brown gave some examples of the problems and stated federal officials are already working with his staff to correct them. But he refused to provide a copy of a November 29 letter that spells out the citations because it contains sensitive security information and is not subject to the Georgia Open Records Act. Macon Chief Administrative Officer Regina McDuffie agreed.

City Council members were incensed to learn of the situation, which Brown did not mention until Councilwoman Elaine Lucas asked him about it during a discussion of another matter during a recent Appropriations Committee meeting. Lucas said she had heard of the citations from her husband, State Representative David Lucas, D-Macon.

The citations revelation came as Brown was seeking council approval for contract changes for work at the airport. But with the limited information on the citations and because of other problems with the contracts, which Brown acknowledged were not handled in accordance with city protocol, the committee tabled the con-

tract issue until more information is made available.

Brown stated that none of the citations are serious. He invited council members to a Wednesday afternoon meeting with TSA and FAA officials, representatives from the airport's lone airline, Atlantic Southeast Airlines, and the city's airport consultant.

"By the end of the week almost all of these problems, if not all of them, will go away," Brown said.

Brown said the November 29 letter mentions access to certain areas of the airport is not controlled properly, there is a lack of security knowledge by airport personnel and there is a problem with runway striping.

Some of the problems date back to May, Brown said. That is when the airport passed security standards it had to meet to regain its status as a Category IV airport—a designation that allows airplanes with more than 60 seats to use the airport. The airport lost that designation in January, but it later passed muster with federal regulators.

The airport could lose that designation

again if it doesn't address the citations, but Brown said he doesn't think that will happen.

One of the citations deals with a gate that controls access to one of the roads leading to the airport, Brown said. That gate is being automated as part of a larger project, which includes utility lines for private hangars at the airport. Contracts for that project were not reviewed by the city attorney's office or city council, Brown said. One, with a plumber, was based on a standard contract found on the Internet, he said, much of that work has already been completed.

"So you have already done it and you want us to approve what you have done?" Appropriations Committee Chairman Henry Ficklin asked.

"Very, very bad precedent," said Councilman Rick Hutto.

But Brown noted that when the City solicited bids for the construction work, no one responded. So he actively sought a contractor and ended up getting the work done for less than the city had budgeted. "We were behind schedule," Brown said, "Way behind schedule...My task was to get it delivered."

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## GROUP WANTS NEW AIRPORT FOR PEE DEE, GRAND STRAND

A group of lawmakers and business leaders is beginning the process (again) of establishing a regional airport to serve the Pee Dee and Grand Strand areas in

South Carolina. The North Eastern Strategic Alliance is issuing a second request for firms to study the feasibility of creating a regional airport be-

tween Myrtle Beach and Florence. The group has committed \$75,000 for the study.

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## CELL PHONE PARKING LOT OPENS AT SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

It should be quicker and easier for those picking up passengers arriving at Southwest Florida International Airport now that the new "cell phone" parking lot is opened. Drivers can wait—at no charge—in the new parking lot until arriving passengers contact them via cell phone upon arriving at the terminal curb. Drivers using the cell phone lot must remain with their vehicles.

"Increased post-9/11 security, which prohibits parking at terminal curbs and the popularity of cell phones have prompted airports throughout the nation to offer this service," said Robert Ball, A.A.E., executive director of the Lee County Port Authority. "It's being offered at Southwest Florida International Airport both as a convenience to airport users and as a tool for minimiz-

ing traffic and curbside congestion."

Driving from the cell phone lot to the terminal takes only a few minutes, so arriving passengers are encouraged to make the call only after receiving their checked baggage and they are standing at the curb.

## RIVAL “ANGELS” FIGHT OVER FLIGHTS

Joan McLane says she would be dead without Angel Flight Southeast.

Based in Leesburg, Florida, the air charity that arranges free flights on private planes for medically and financially needy patients helps the 73-year-old woman travel from her home in Lake County to a specialist in Vero Beach every three months for pain-killing treatments.

“They’re lifesavers,” McLane says.

But there are rival angels in these southeastern skies. A competing charity, Angel Flight of Georgia, has its own roster of volunteer pilots flying mercy missions. The dueling Angel Flights are locked in a devil of a dogfight—each claiming the other is working against them.

They are entangled in a federal lawsuit concerning the Angel Flight name and the right to raise money and recruit pilots in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina. A Florida pilot who has flown missions for both charities likened the venomous dispute to a fight between bell-ringers over a Salvation Army kettle at the local shopping mall.

The feud could cost both charities—and thus the patients they serve—said Ken Rusnak, executive director of Angel Flight America, a national network of six regional air charities.

“It’s people fighting over nothing—strictly ego,” Rusnak said.

He said he is hopeful for a settlement soon, perhaps a merger between the Florida group which belongs to the national network, and the Georgia group, which doesn’t.

Though each air charity claims the high road in the lawsuit, scheduled for trial in late spring, the fight intensified last month with each group delivering what the other considered a low blow.

The Georgia group bought a series of ads soliciting donations from readers of Florida newspapers, including the Orlando Sentinel and The Daily Commercial in Leesburg.

“Why would they pick Lake County

[for their ads]?” asked Deborah Deal, president of Angel Flight Southeast. “You’re sitting in Atlanta, land of milk and honey and Coca-Cola, and you come to little Leesburg looking for money? It’s only to strike at us.”

The air charity’s Web site, [www.angelflightse.org](http://www.angelflightse.org), has since posted a note for perspective donors warning of “unauthorized organizations” using the Angel Flight name to raise money.

Deal also alerted the State Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that Angel Flight of Georgia was not licensed to solicit tax-deductible contributions in Florida.

The Florida group, meanwhile, entered a float in the Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade, a holiday event broadcast in its rival’s fundraising core.

Angel Flight of Georgia did not attend the parade.

## PARKING LOT OPENING DELAYED

The newest parking lot at Tri-Cities Regional Airport (Tenn.) won’t be opened in time for the busy holiday travel season.

Construction on a 291-space long-term parking lot has just begun, with an opening date in early March, according to Airport Executive Director Patrick Wilson.

“These additional spaces should give us ample capacity for a couple of years,” Wilson says.

The airport will have 1,331 parking spaces when workers finish the new lot, not including the 21 metered spaces in front of the terminal building. Parking lots at the airport have been full more frequently this year, said Melissa Thomas, director of airport marketing.

More than 130,000 cars parked on airport lots through September, compared to 115,000 during all of last year—a 13% increase.

From 2003 to 2004, vehicle numbers increased only about 7 percent.

The airport set a parking record in March when 885 cars parked in the lots designated to hold only 854.

When the lots fill up, motorists park wherever they can—even illegally—airport officials say.

To alleviate the parking problem, two other expansions were completed this year. An area known as the overflow lot was paved this spring adding 62

spaces. An additional 200 spaces were added this spring when a former rental car lot was converted to long-term parking.

Parking fees increased in July to help pay for the expansions. Short-term parking fees increased from \$8 per day to \$10 per day. Long-term parking increased \$1 per day.

The new parking lot will cost \$1.2 million with 90% of the project funded through state grants.

Although the new lot will not be ready for Christmas, Thomas said she does not expect any overflow.

**Southeast Chapter Journal**

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## 17th Annual Finance & Administration Conference

The Southeast Chapter—AAAE and the American Association of Airport Executives are pleased to present the 17th Annual Airport Finance & Administration Conference. The Theme of the 2006 Conference is “Changing How Airports Do Business.”

The Conference is scheduled for March 5-7, 2006 in Jacksonville, Florida, at the Omni Jacksonville Hotel. The Conference will cover a host of topics ranging from new revenue opportunities to airline bankruptcy issues. This conference will cover all the subjects that those working in the finance and administration fields need to know to manage today's airports.

Airport executives with finance and administration responsibilities should not miss this special networking opportunity to learn how others are coping with today's challenges. You will come away from the meeting with new ideas that may prove to be the right solutions for your airport or company.

Some of the topics scheduled to be discussed and debated include:

- ▶ Airline Bankruptcy Issues
- ▶ Disaster Recovery Issues
- ▶ Impact of Low Cost Carriers
- ▶ New Revenue Opportunities
- ▶ Capacity Restraints
- ▶ TSA/Current Security Issues
- ▶ Revenue Guarantees
- ▶ Can Airports Reduce Airline Costs?

If you are in the field of airport finance and administration and can only attend one conference this year, this is for you! Come attend the conference, network with other finance and administration professionals and go home with a wealth of knowledge!

Go to [www.aaae.org](http://www.aaae.org) for additional information and registration details.

## TOMMY BIBB, AAEE, PREPARES NASHVILLE FOR OUR ARRIVAL!

Former SEC-AAAE Board Member and current 2006 SEC-AAAE Annual Conference Chairman, Tommy Bibb, A.A.E., is preparing Nashville, Tenn., for our arrival on May 21, 2006! The 2006 Annual Conference will run May 21—23, 2006 at the Lowes Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel. Tommy Bibb promises a strong program topped with lots of fun, the Lowes Vanderbilt Hotel promises a comfortable and luxurious venue and Nashville promises plenty of music and revelry late into the night! Sounds like a good time, huh?

Oh, but this is business.

The 2006 Conference Committee has established a slate of sessions that will prove to be fresh and innovative and have applications at all sized airports. Some of the session topics include:

- ▶ Natural Disaster Recovery,
- ▶ Master Planning and the Re-Write of FAA Advisory Circulars,
- ▶ Energy Saving Opportunities Through Innovative Technologies,
- ▶ The Cost of Airport Consulting Fees,
- ▶ The Rising Costs of Airport Construction and Development, and
- ▶ Strategic Listening.

Speakers will include industry professionals, members of the academic community and well-known airport professionals. All will offer new ways of looking at and addressing old problems with new and innovative ideas.

The conference will offer a wonderful learning opportunity and you will write home about the great food and entertainment!

Oh, but this is business.

Registration forms are available on the Chapter's website or feel free to contact Tommy directly at 615.275.1678 or email him at [tom\\_bibb@nashintl.com](mailto:tom_bibb@nashintl.com).