

SEC JOURNAL

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Chattanooga Business Center</i>	1
<i>Asheville Maintenance Facility</i>	1
<i>Melbourne Takes Over</i>	2
<i>Service on the Board?</i>	2
<i>Travelers Leave Roanoke</i>	3
<i>Hangars Needed for Take Off</i>	3
<i>Changes at Charleston</i>	4

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FIRST TENNESSEE SPONSORS AIRPORT BUSINESS CENTER AT CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport Authority has announced that First Tennessee is now sponsoring the Airport's business center located in the concourse area past the security checkpoint.

The First Tennessee Business Center (FTBC) "will continue to provide passengers with quiet comfort, convenient and state-of-the-art business tools while they wait for their flight," officials said.

Admittance to the club will now be free of charge to all travelers holding an airline club membership with any of the major airlines serving Chattanooga.

"First Tennessee has been a great partner

to the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport and our passengers are now the beneficiaries of that partnership as we open the First Tennessee Business Center to our airline club members," said Mike Landguth, president and CEO of the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport and member of the Southeast Chapter-AAAE Board of Directors. FTBC patrons will have access to club amenities such as a comfortable television lounge, complimentary snacks and beverages, personal workstations with data ports for computer usage, wireless Internet access, newspapers and periodicals, a photo copier and fax machine.

"The Chattanooga Airport is the gateway to

our city for many business travelers," said Frank Schriener, regional president of First Tennessee. "We are pleased to join with the Airport Authority in creating a welcoming environment for business travelers to work in comfort before boarding their flight."

The Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport is served by six major airline brands providing convenient non-stop service to ten major cities with connections to hundreds of destinations worldwide.

Situated in the some of the most beautiful country in Tennessee, additional information on the airport can be found at www.chattairport.com.

Ashville Opening Maintenance Facility

David N. Edwards, AAE, Airport Director at Asheville Regional Airport and President of the Southeast Chapter-AAAE, recently assisted other airport officials in cutting the ribbon on a new \$2.8 million maintenance facility at the airport.

The building is located to the east of the general aviation facilities at

the airport. It has space for vehicle storage and maintenance, training and other airport activities. The facility was built with federal and state funding.

In other news, a Colorado company is considering a project to bring about 392,000 square feet of additional hangar, office and aircraft maintenance space to the airport.

The \$37 million pro-

ject is designed to attract aviation-related businesses and ease the shortage of hangar space for general aviation aircraft based at the airport.

The airport Board previously approved an agreement for Denver-based Aviation Development Group until the end of next March to explore the concept.

AIRPORT CUTS COSTS AND TAKES OVER DUTIES OF CONCESSIONAIRES

The Melbourne Airport Authority recently agreed to take over parking and food and beverage operations at Melbourne International Airport.

The Authority, with little discussion, voted to terminate the contract with Lackmann Management of Florida, Inc., which operated two bar and food-service facilities in the airport terminal.

The Airport Authority also voted not to renew a contract with Republic Parking System to operate its public parking lots. The relationship with Republic Parking dates back 41 years. The agreement expires January 31, 2007.

Both actions are based on a sharp decrease in passenger traffic brought about by Delta Air Lines, the airport's only major commercial carrier, reducing flight operations at Melbourne International.

During the first nine months of this year, passenger levels at the airport fell 29 percent from a year earlier after Delta's regional carrier, Comair, ended round-trip flights to New York City and a Saturday flight to Cincinnati.

An added blow to Melbourne airline service occurred when Florida Coastal Airlines, a small commuter carrier operating a fleet of five Cessna 402C aircraft, ended their service to Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach from Melbourne. Florida Coastal Airlines is best known for its service to the Bahamas.

Airport officials believe they can run the airport parking operation efficiently in-house by offering incentives to passengers and installing wireless automated equipment that recognizes each vehicle entering and leaving the parking location. The equipment calculates the time a vehicle has been in the lot and posts the revenues without the assistance of human intervention.

Officials at Melbourne International Airport estimated that the airport could realize about \$100,000 in profits in its first year of operating the parking facility. That figure is based, at least in part, on a study by consultants at Florida Tech.

Chris Howley, executive vice president with the Chattanooga-based Republic Parking System and a well known face at Southeast Chapter-AAAE conferences, did his best to persuade airport authority members to modify the contract as opposed to terminating it.

Melbourne International Airport is Republic Parking's longest continuous-running contract, Howley said. "Statistically, less than ten percent of commercial service airports operate their parking in-house," Howley said. "In-house parking operations may see a one- or two-year net gain, but it never is as large as predicted, and within three years, revenues are

down and expenses are up," he added.

Melbourne International Airport Executive Director Richard Ennis said he is confident of the airport staff's ability to run the parking operation. He said there is a chance to increase revenues "without a great deal of extra work for our staff."

SO, WHO COOKS NOW?

For food service, airport officials indicate it has cost about \$187,000 to subsidize that operation in the past 12 months. Financially breaking even with food and beverage services would require more than 500,000 passengers using the airport each year.

About 400,000 passengers now use the airport annually, although the nine-month totals for this year suggest that number could fall this year and the half-million figure may not be reached.

In July of this year, Melbourne International Airport took over the baggage and ground handling operations from Orlando-based Aircraft Services International. The company pulled out because of a loss of business from Delta Air Lines. The airport is now overseeing ground-handling at a loss of about \$42,000 a month according to recent figures.

EVER CONSIDERED SERVICE ON THE SEC BOARD?

Have you given any consideration to serving on the Board of Directors for the Southeast Chapter-AAAE? Each year, at least one Executive Member is placed on the Board and next year it could be you. All that is required is a letter to the Chairman

of the Nominations Committee stating your interest and a letter from your superior stating that your airport will support you with the time and travel expenses required to attend the meetings. Currently, there are three to four

meetings held during a given fiscal year.

This year's Chairman of the Nominations Committee is Tim Doll, AAE. You can contact Tim at tdoll@littlerockairport.aero for the full description on Board service.

TRAVELERS LEAVE ROANOKE FOR CHEAPER FARES

Spotting out-of-towners is like a game for airport shuttle bus driver Gary Pitts. Circling the parking lot, he eyes the license plates and calls out the names of states as if he were entertaining himself on a long road trip. "There's a Virginia. There's a Virginia." He points to the left, then to the right, the bus creeping along a row of cars in the long-term parking lot at the Piedmont Triad International Airport. "Got another Virginia over here."

To Mr. Pitts, this influx of Virginians is of no surprise. For years, the Greensboro airport, which is about twice the size of the Roanoke Regional Airport (Va.) has stood as an inexpensive alternative for Roanoke Valley travelers seeking cheaper airfares and a better variety of nonstop flights. But lately its hold on the low-fare market has begun to slip with competition closing in from larger airports to the east and south. For Roanokers, that could mean less leakage to the North Carolina airport. It could also mean Roanokers travel even farther in their attempts to save money on airfares.

Last year, about one-third of air travelers who bought plane tickets in and around the Roanoke Valley left town to catch their flights, a figure that had budgeted little in more than a dec-

ade, according to officials at Roanoke Regional Airport. About 11 percent of the leaked traffic drifted down to Greensboro's Triad Airport, which operates 77 departures-a-day, a little more than twice the number of flights operating from Roanoke Regional. Others migrate to larger international airports such as Charlotte, N.C., Raleigh-Durham, N.C., and Washington, D.C., where discount airfares are plentiful and they can catch flights on fare-busters like JetBlue and Southwest Airlines.

The majority of these passengers are dollar-conscious leisure travelers with more flexibility in their schedules—people like 59-year old Roanoke County resident Margaret Walker who has lived in the valley for nine years and says she has never flown out of Roanoke Regional Airport. Ideally, Walker says, she would rather skip the two- to three-hour drive to Greensboro or Raleigh Durham—a trip she often makes to visit with her children in Texas and Cleveland. But the hassles of crowded hubs and multi-hour layovers are just too much for her to bear. Price is also a factor and Walker said she adamantly believes fares are vastly cheaper at airports in North Carolina.

"Even considering the price of gas, its cheaper," Walker said.

All of this is nothing new to Jacque Shuck, Executive Director at Roanoke Regional Airport, who frequently fields complaints from Roanokers bemoaning the state of air travel in Southwest Virginia. The airport frequently finds itself in the position of trying to match the wants of the passengers with the whims of the airlines.

"A lot of people don't understand. It isn't a field of dreams," Shuck said about the airline business. "It's not bring in the airlines and we'll fill them with passengers." Airlines go where they find passengers, she added, and when passengers leave Roanoke, so does the incentive for mainline carriers, such as US Airways and Delta, to increase their air service.

Their decisions are also directly related to population density, Shuck added. And Roanoke, with a population of about 500,000 in a 60-mile radius surrounding the airport, is in many ways a victim of its own size.

Hangars Needed for Airport to Take Off

John Berkley owns a "rare bird" he would prefer nesting at the Bentonville Municipal Airport in Arkansas. The four-seat, high wing Aero Commander Lark, built more than 35 years ago, is similar to a Cessna 172 and currently stays with the flock of aircraft down the road at the Springdale Municipal Airport. This will remain the Lark's home until Bentonville replaces a T-hangar wrecked by a tornado on March 12th of this year.

Along with the fixed base operation, eight aircraft housed in an open T-hangar were destroyed that night. The storm eliminated storage for up to 14 aircraft. Remaining are 20

individual hangars and four large hangars for 3 to 5 aircraft, depending on their size.

Berkley was lucky enough to find a replacement for his rare Aero Commander Lark and also lucky to be renting an enclosed hangar near the fixed base operator in Springdale. "The only downfall is that it's a 30-minute drive. Before, in Bentonville, it was five minutes away," said the 49-year-old Pea Ridge resident. "Most everyone thinks as I do, 'Bentonville is my airport.' That's where we learned to fly...I really want to come home," Berkley said.

Airport officials want to re-

place the fixed base operator building and T-hangar on the east side of the airport, and create along the new westside taxiway two rows of enclosed T-hangars for 10 planes each and seven corporate hangars for up to five single-engine planes each. The larger hangars will be between 80'x80' and 100'x100' in size.

The airport recently laid the asphalt for the west taxiway to provide access to the future hangars.

The Bentonville airport caters to single and twin-engine aircraft and light jets.

Southeast Chapter—AAAE

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SEC-AAAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives will hold a regularly scheduled Board Meeting during the course of the AAAE/SEC-AAAE Finance and Administration Conference to be held January 21-23 at the Marriott Suites on Clearwater Beach in Clearwater, Florida.

The exact date and time of the meeting will be announced to the membership in accordance with the SEC-AAAE Amended and Restated Bylaws.

For future conference information, go to the Chapter website at www.secaaae.org and click on the tab that reads "Conference Calendar."

2007 SEC-AAAE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Chuck Henderson, AAE, Deputy Airport Director at Columbia Metropolitan Airport in Columbia, S.C., and Chairman of the 2007 SEC-AAAE Annual Conference, has been working night and day to ensure the success of the conference. And even though the event is close to six months away (April 29-May1, 2007), Chuck says we should go ahead and make our hotel reservations at the Grande Dunes Marriott in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Because this is a beachfront resort, the rooms are expected to go quickly. The conference has been given the Chapter a discount rate of \$159 per night if reservations are received before March 1, 2007. You can reach the Grande Dunes Reservations Desk at 1-800-644-2881. Ask for the "SEC Airport Executive Group Rate."

Chuck is also finding new ways to recognize our sponsors and give them the credit they so richly deserve. If you are interested in being a sponsor for the 2007 SEC-AAAE Annual Conference, please do not hesitate to call Chuck at (803) 822-5017. Chuck looks forward to hearing from you and he looks forward to seeing you on the beach!

MORE CHANGES AT CHARLESTON

With Cap Prescott, former Director of Properties for the Charleston County Aviation Authority retired, and Sam Hoerter, AAE, Director of Airports, preparing to retire next month, numerous personnel changes have taken place at the Charleston County Aviation Authority.

Susan M. Stevens, AAE, former Deputy Director of Airports succeeds Sam Hoerter and has been named Director of Airports. To assist Ms. Stevens, William New, former Director of Public Safety, has been promoted to Ms. Steven's former position of Deputy Director of Airports.

Judith Olmstead, former Manager of Finance has been promoted to the position of Director of Finance and Administration. Robert Carew, AAE, former Properties Administrator has been named as the new Manager of Properties. Sean Tracey, former Airport Operations Supervisor, has been named Airport Operations Manager and Bob Brammer, former Manager of Engineering and Construction, has been promoted to Director of Operations. Jim Fann, former Manager of Facilities and Equipment has been promoted to Director of Engineering

and Warren May joins the staff as the new Manager of Engineering & Construction.

The 11-member board of the Charleston County Aviation Authority manages the Charleston International Airport located in Charleston County, the Mt. Pleasant Regional Airport located in Mt. Pleasant, S.C. and the Charleston Executive Airport located on Johns Island, S.C.

Sam Hoerter leaves the Airport Authority in excellent condition with numerous projects recently completed and numerous others currently underway or in the planning stages.