



September, 2002

Position Paper Eastern North Carolina Air Service

The Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce supports regionalism and actively participates in a leadership role for the enhancement of growth and prosperity in Eastern North Carolina.

Critical to the growth and development of Eastern North Carolina is the continuation and improvement of air service. The two issues cited as most critical to business and industry leaders in Pitt County are (1) accessibility and (2) pricing.

There is agreement among business, industry and area leaders that consolidating airports in Eastern North Carolina would unlikely have a positive impact on pricing and would not significantly change direct access to multiple destinations. It is believed to be a misconception that a consolidated airport in Eastern North Carolina can fully compete with Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU).

The definition of “not being able to compete” is inclusive of price discrepancies, numbers of airlines available and access to multiple locations on direct flights as well as jet service. Because of the “Southwest Effect,” no airport in North Carolina is able to successfully compete with RDU. This “Southwest Effect” is defined as the mission of airlines to offer low cost, short haul, high frequency flights from designated airports such as RDU and drawing customers from a hundred mile radius. While the opportunity to find competitive pricing to/from PGV does exist, it has not been consistent nor of the pricing magnitude as found at RDU. Cost conscious businesses frequently choose to fly to and from RDU in an effort to save money. Leisure travelers are even more conscious of this savings.

Unless this trend changes, RDU will continue to draw the largest percentage of travelers – both business and leisure – from Eastern North Carolina. RDU currently boards more “point of origin” passengers than any other airport in North Carolina, including Charlotte.

In spite of the competition that draws Eastern North Carolina travelers to RDU, the Pitt-Greenville Airport continues to operate efficiently and self-sufficiently, without the use of any city or county taxpayer dollars. Further, passenger air service at PGV will be strengthened beginning Nov. 1 when service begins from Piedmont Airlines, the wholly-owned subsidiary of USAirways, which replaces the current service by CCAir, a franchise carrier. With this new service, the smallest aircraft that will be used will seat 37 passengers.

Currently, Pitt County – specifically the Greenville area – is an economic, cultural and retail hub in Eastern North Carolina. It is a hub that can and does benefit the entire region.

Many businesses and industries have located here because of Pitt County’s position as that hub. Significant factors in the establishment of Greenville and Pitt County as a significant hub include East

Carolina University, University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, a diverse array of large-employer industries, the largest concentration of small businesses in the region and the 11th largest retail county in the state. Additionally, the completion of the Greenville Convention Center strengthens Greenville's position as a specific destination in Eastern North Carolina.

It is in the best interest of the East to capitalize on the already existing hub of Greenville, and to support the growth and development of Eastern North Carolina is to support the continued development of the Greenville area hub. To do that is to support continued passenger air service at PGV.

To this end, it is the current position of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce to support and uphold the continued viability of the Pitt-Greenville Airport (PGV) as a point of departure and arrival for business and leisure travelers of eastern North Carolina. Further, the Chamber will support efforts by PGV to expand passenger air services.

Further, the Chamber encourages the business community of Pitt County to use the facilities and services available at PGV as often as possible to ensure strengthening of our passenger air service.

Further, the Chamber commits to work with the authorities of PGV in efforts to address the issue of pricing and to promote use by travelers.

We have no doubt that communities surrounding Greenville and Pitt County will continue to prosper and grow as Greenville continues to grow and develop as a metropolitan area.

Adopted the 18th day of September, 2002

Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

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