HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

It has been a very busy winter season. Our airlines completed a strong schedule these past couple of months averaging over 75 weekly flights. At the end of March, our traffic was up 6% over the previous year, despite winter storms that disrupted and cancelled flights at many airports, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest. We had our share of delays, but very few cancelled flights. Now, springtime is here and traffic is brisk with visits from family and friends, and of course, spring breakers.

I have been the Airport Director for over 7 years. During the first two years of my tenure, the demographic was comprised of some business travelers on ATA airlines, but the majority of passengers flying on our 3 domestic airlines were seniors. This all started to change in November 2006 when Allegiant Air started service. Today, there are many younger travelers, including families with children. I hear French spoken in the terminal by passengers from the Montreal area who are flying on Allegiant Air to and from Plattsburgh, NY. There is a new vibrant atmosphere at the airport and we love it!

In an article published on April 6, 2011, Nate Silver wrote a column titled, “Which Airports Have the Most Unfair Fares?” Silver completed an extensive study on airport’s air fares and found St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport the most competitively priced small airport in the nation. Silver notes that being a vacation destination and a warm-weather city along with having the majority of service by low-cost carrier, Allegiant Air, are key factors for airports with the most competitive priced fares. Emphasizing that Allegiant Air has a dominant presence at 8 of the 10 most-competitively priced small airports, Silver concludes that Allegiant Air’s profitability may be due to “far more customers may be willing to use your service when you’re willing to charge them a fair price.” To read the full article, see -

http://fivethirtyeightblogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/06/which-airports-have-the-most-unfair-fares/

As airlines continue to adjust to rising fuel prices, fares are going up and capacity is being reduced. Planes fly full much of the time. As Silver’s article indicated, fares from PIE on our non-stop, low-cost airlines are still very affordable, which in this economic climate make air travel a good value.

We look forward to a solid summer with more of our locals venturing out to some of our great non-stop destinations as they visit family and friends. And in the fall, our September and October schedules show an increase in flights from a year ago.

More to come….
Noah Lagos

AIR SERVICE NEWS

St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) is pleased to welcome the expanded air service of Vision Airlines. Vision has been flying charter service to Gulfport-Biloxi for the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino and now offers scheduled air service to Ft. Walton Beach/Destin, FL with connections to Asheville, NC; Huntsville, AL; and Chattanooga, TN. For more information, visit www.VisionAirlines.com or call 1-877-FLY-A-JET (359-2538).
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT - The latest on projects at the airport and surrounding airport-owned real estate. For more information, contact Properties Director Bob Humberstone at (727)453-7820 or bhumber@pinellascounty.org.

Airco Golf Course Closing

Effective May 16th, 2011 the Airco Golf Course will be closed. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) voted to approve the course’s closure at their March 22nd meeting. The airport operates as an enterprise fund department of Pinellas County and receives no taxpayer subsidy from County funds. Airco Golf Course has been down in round play for the past 3 years, but particularly since the country has experienced a pronounced economic downturn. Airco lost more than $216,000 in Fiscal Year 2010, as well as losing money in Fiscal Year’s 2008 and 2009. Golf rounds not only have decreased at Airco, but at other municipal golf courses in Pinellas County.

Prior to 2001, the golf course was operated by a private entity which had leased the land from the airport. In 2001, the County took over its operation which required approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA agreed to the proposal on an interim use basis only, while commercial development was to be pursued. It was envisioned at that time that the Airco property would be rezoned for commercial use within 2-3 years, which did not come to fruition. FAA regulations require airports to be as self-sustaining as possible, to use its land for its highest and best use, and not divert airport funds for public purposes such as the continued operation of what is perceived to be a County public golf course, particularly when that operation has a negative impact on airport revenue.

The Airport Master Plan which was approved by the BCC in 2004 recommended future commercial development of Airco. Next, an Airco Redevelopment Study was undertaken and then presented to the BCC in 2008. In late 2009, a public hearing was held and the change of land use and zoning for Airco’s 127 acres was approved. The property is now zoned for 10 acres General Retail Commercial and Limited Services (Hotels, etc), 45 acres for aviation, and 72 acres for office/industrial.

As part of the approval process, the BCC directed County Administration to seek FAA approval of the creation of a buffer area comprised of airport owned commercial property which separates portions of a residential neighborhood in Feather Sound from the golf course. The FAA approved the creation of this “green space” area in August 2010.

Although there are no immediate plans for development, the decision to close the golf course operation in May, prior to the slow summer season, was to mitigate future revenue loss to the airport. Unfortunately, in this economic climate and the national decline in recreational golf play, keeping the course open was no longer a fiscally sound option.

Airport Completes Construction of Allegiant’s New Air Service Facility

As air service continues to expand, Allegiant Air required additional airside space to support their maintenance and ground service operations. On November 16, 2010, Pinellas County approved a construction contract with Eveland Brothers, Inc. for the renovation and addition to Allegiant’s existing airside operations facility. Allegiant’s existing airside space was approximately 440 square feet. Their new building totals 2,163 square feet and consists of office and warehouse space. Construction is now complete with a design and construction cost of approximately $348,000.
AIRPORT OPERATIONS & NOISE AFFAIRS UPDATE - For questions about PIE’s Noise Abatement and Mitigation Program, contact the Noise Affairs Office at (727)453-7880 or airportnoise@pinellascounty.org. If you have concerns or complaints about aircraft noise, please contact the Noise Hotline at (727)453-7877 or visit our website at www.fly2pie.com/noise. The website features a flight tracking option, frequently asked questions about aircraft noise, and an automated complaint form for reporting noise incidents to the airport.

Noise Abatement Task Force (NATF)

Community, airport, and aviation tenant representatives meet to discuss noise affairs at PIE. All meetings are held quarterly in the Airport Conference Room 234 and are open to the public; minutes are posted on the website. Upcoming meetings are July 27th and October 19th at 3:00.

Airport Operations

Welcome New TSA Assistant Federal Security Director—Jean Barnes. Jean will be splitting her time overseeing the TSA security operations at PIE, Sarasota Bradenton International Airport, and Lakeland Airport. Our best wishes to our former PIE Assistant Federal Security Director Dave Stewart, who has been reassigned to Tampa Int'l Airport.

PIE participated in the Inaugural Tampa Bay Aviation Association Bay-Area Safety Stand Down and Fly-in at Tampa Executive Airport (VDF, formerly known as Vandenberg Airport). In conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the local FAA Safety Team, Hillsborough County Aviation Authority, and Leading Edge Aviation, PIE presented local noise abatement information as part of our Fly-Friendly program. Approximately 200 area aviators attended April 16th for a full day of safety seminars and information. For more information on FAA Safety, visit their website at www.faasafety.gov.

St. Petersburg-Clearwater and Tampa Int'l Airports hold joint emergency drill

The two Tampa Bay area commercial airports participated together to simulate an emergency situation with a commercial passenger flight going down in the water off of SR60. Federal, state, local, and military agencies were involved in the full scale drill, which is required by the FAA to be held every 3 years. After months of preparation and the execution of the drill on April 12th, a full debrief with all participating agencies was held to critique the exercise and discuss strengths and weaknesses.
Commercial Filming at PIE

The airport works with the commercial film industry and the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Film Commission on various projects throughout the year. Projects including infomercials, feature films, commercial photo shoots, and TV have all taken place at PIE. Recently, Aerora Aerospace’s zero gravity flights have been featured in “Germany’s Next Top Model”, and pictured at left, a Discovery Channel episode of “Life on a Wire”.

Film applications are available by contacting Michele Routh at 727-453-7879 or email mrouth@pinellascounty.org.

The airport added a facebook business page. Be sure to “like” us and tell your friends!
www.facebook.com/pages/St-Petersburg-Clearwater-International-Airport-PIE

Airport Operations Volunteer Jean Glick featured in Tampa Bay Newspapers March edition

Jean Glick has been volunteering in the airport operations department for almost 20 years. Aviation is a lifelong passion for Jean. She got her pilot’s license as a young woman, married a pilot, and in the 70’s became the first female Air Traffic Controller in New York.

In 1992, Jean started as an Airport Ambassador assisting passengers. She has volunteered the last several years assisting our operations staff in many important functions. She volunteers for other organizations as well. Pinellas County is very fortunate to have her and all of our volunteers.

Pinellas County will be celebrating our tourists and employees the first weeks of May. Tribute to Tourism Week kicks off on May 6th with Visit St. Pete/Clearwater’s annual luncheon. May 2-6 recognizes all Pinellas County employees with Employee Appreciation Week. Thank you to our airport employees for their service and our tourists for being such gracious visitors!

2011 Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Award

Congratulations Frederick W. Smith, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of FedEx Corporation. Since founding FedEx in 1971, Smith has been a leader in aviation, business, charitable and civic endeavors worldwide. He will be honored on Thursday, October 27th at the Jannus Awards Banquet.

The Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society also awards scholarships to college students through the Jannus Scholar Awards funded by the Silent Auction.

Visit www.tonyjannus.org or call (727)821-5155 ext.120 for more information. The Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society is a tax-exempt 501(c)3.