

Perspective from Greg Donovan

Ready for some good news? The numbers are in and our airport system comprised of Bob Sikes Airport in Crestview, Destin Airport, and Northwest Florida Regional Airport jointly located on Eglin AFB contributes more than one-half a billion dollars – precisely \$509 million – of positive economic impact every year into our local community while employing more than 4,500 people. A recently completed



study by the University of West Florida Haas Business Center determined that Okaloosa County's airports are significant economic engines. The accomplishment is even more notable considering that all airports are financially self-sustaining, generating revenue entirely from airport users, and not dependent on ad valorem taxes. The whole community benefits from a vibrant airport system.

You may have noticed that competition in the region has especially increased over recent months. Introduction of a new airline in the neighborhood has encouraged all carriers to offer spectacular fares and air travel is a real bargain. When you are planning a trip, remember to consider the true cost and time considerations of driving. Our parking rates are the lowest in the region and the convenience of our central location makes VPS a speedy choice. Be sure to check out our website, www.flyvps.com, for the latest specials.

Lastly, we have the distinct honor of being located on Eglin Air Force Base jointly utilizing the airfield since 1957. Our 54 daily commercial flights complement the military's mission by providing immediate accessibility for active duty, contractors, and dependents without having to make an hour plus drive elsewhere. Making the most of time is important to our heavily worked military and the time spent inside the terminal, whether it is the traveler or welcome home greeters, will have one more amenity with the new USO Freedom Lounge that will officially open June 29. Over 100 volunteers will staff the facility and will serve a dual purpose by providing information booth duties too.

Serving our military is a core mission at VPS and so are discounts for our most distinguished customers. Up to three checked bags are free for active duty military, whether flying on orders or for personal reasons – on all of our airlines.

Have a great summer and thank you for supporting your Northwest Florida Regional Airport.