

# Chapter 26: Air Services

## INTRODUCTION

Aviation contributes to the Region's transportation system. There are two public aviation facilities located within the Region, the Fair Haven Municipal Airport, a minor public municipal airport and the State-owned and operated Rutland State Airport. They provide a distinct function which has an impact on the local economy.

Daily commercial passenger air service is provided at Rutland Airport.

This section is focused on planning and developing the potential that air transportation holds in the Rutland Region, its economic implications and interface with other modes.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

### *Fair Haven Airport*

The Fair Haven Airport, located roughly 1.7 miles north of Fair Haven, consists of a 2050-foot turf-gravel runway and limited hanger space. The airport is unattended with no commercial services. During the winter, the runway is not maintained and so it is available only to ski-equipped aircraft. Aircraft traffic is estimated at less than 1,000 takeoffs and landings annually.

The Town of Fair Haven has been working on airport improvements, including an update of the airport master plan, rebuilding and paving of all airport surfaces and continued work with the Federal Aviation Authority. The 2004 Airport Master Plan recommended that the runway be realigned and extended to 3,150 feet in anticipation of the airport continuing as a small general aviation airport. An environmental assessment of the proposed realigned runway is scheduled in 2006.

### *Rutland State Airport*

Rutland Airport is located approximately seven miles south of Rutland City near the intersection of US 7 and Vermont 103 in the Town of Clarendon. It is classified as a short haul commercial service airport with flights typically less than 500 miles in length. It serves the southern end of the US 7 corridor. As one of ten State-owned public use airports, its management and administrative functions are handled by the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Two runways serve the airport; the primary runway (1-19) is 5,000 feet in length and the crosswind runway (13-31) is 3,170 feet in length. Facilities include a terminal building (with restaurant, parking, car rental, and a Transportation Security Administration office), a State Police substation, and a series of airport maintenance, and Civil Air Patrol buildings. There are 40 paved tie downs, 8 unpaved tie downs (for "ultra light" aircraft), 12 T-hangers, 13 conventional hangers, 5 maintenance hangers and over 30,000 square feet of parking apron. Additionally, there is a non-precision



The Region's airports have a direct impact on businesses and tourism in the Region. At the same time, airports can be sources of land use conflicts; decisions about development immediately adjacent to the Fair Haven and Rutland State airports should be made with careful consideration to future compatibility.



Aerial view of the Rutland State Airport in Clarendon

www.vermontairports.com/rutland



### FAST FACT

Enplanements at the Rutland State Airport vary by month, as well as by year.

Early spring, mid summer, and the holiday season in December mark annual high points for air travel in the Region. Mud season and January are the low points.

Recent marketing efforts include a website- [www.flyrutland.com](http://www.flyrutland.com)

instrument approach using a localizer to Runway 19.

One full service fixed base operator offers flight instruction, hangar storage, tie down and fuel sales; a second fixed base operator offers small and antique aircraft maintenance and repair. The airport has forty-four based aircraft.

The airport serves a large number of area businesses, some of whom only operate in the area because of the airport. Included in business-related operations are Continental Connection operated by CommutAir's flights to and from Boston and flights by both UPS and FEDEX at the airport. Personnel of OMYA Corporation, the American Skiing Company and General Electric are frequent users. Corporate jets owned by Time Warner, Dow Chemical, General Dynamics, Cox Enterprises and Peace River Citrus also operate at the airport.

Other activities include two events sponsored by the local Experimental

Aircraft Association, an open house for the community and an annual Aviation Career Education Camp. A Civil Air Patrol Squadron is active at Rutland and provides youth-oriented programs.

According to an economic study prepared in 2003\*, the Rutland State Airport generates a total local economic impact of \$6,845,000, with an even larger statewide impact.

Vermont uses State funds to match FAA grants at State airports. The passenger service is dependent upon the Essential Air Subsidy for sustainability.

*\*Source: Simat, Helliesen & Eichner, Economic Development Research Group, Dufresne-Henry and Yellow Wood Associates. Economic Impact of Vermont's Public Use Airports. April 2003.*

## UNMET NEEDS

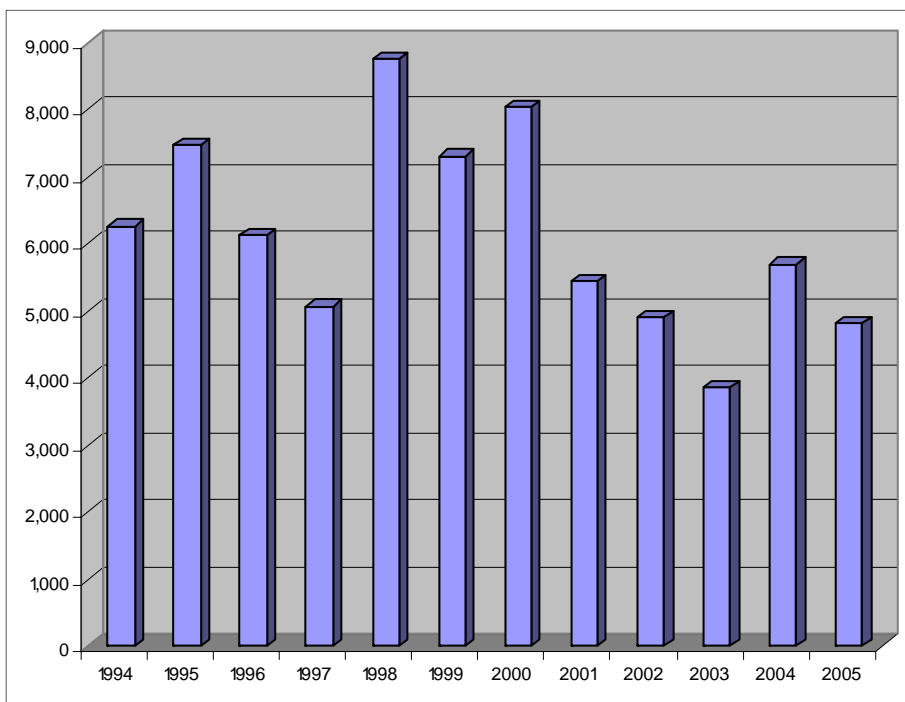
The rules for operating an airport capable of hosting air carrier operations place infrastructure demands on the airport and on the airport sponsor in personnel and financial support required.

A recent FAA requirement relating to full time fire/rescue personnel required Rutland Airport to downgrade its certificate to accommodate less than 30-seat scheduled air carriers only. Carriers previously offering services on larger aircraft have been forced to change equipment or cease service to the airport.

Significant continued growth in corporate and high-end personal air travel is expected in the 9-11 era. Fractional (time-share) ownership of jet aircraft and the introduction of the Very Light Jet aircraft provide fast and economical point to point air transportation making Rutland Airport an important destination and origin for business and personal travel. Scheduled airline and freight service provide a backbone for economic development and the hospitality industry throughout southern Vermont.

Seasonally variable weather conditions

## RUTLAND STATE AIRPORT ANNUAL ENPLANMENTS: 1994-2005



Annual enplanements have fluctuated at the Rutland State Airport. Changes in services offered by commercial providers and the events of September 11, 2001 have affected ridership. *Source: Rutland State Airport*

and the surrounding area's topography have limited the airport's operational capabilities because of required approach vectors and the potential for cancelled or delayed scheduled flights.

## FUTURE TRENDS

Recent discussions in developing the Runway Safety Area Study with the business community have generated an interest in extending the primary runway to 6000 feet. Such an extension would provide sufficient runway length to accommodate commercial and corporate aircraft activity well into the foreseeable future. The first step in such a large project would be to update the Airport Master Plan to provide justification, identify the fit with the other airport projects and to address the other issues impinging on successful growth.

In addition to the economic impact that airport and airport-related industry has in the Region, air access ranks high as a required transportation mode for regional growth and stability. The types of businesses that are likely to be attracted to the Region, as well as our current growth in the recreational industry, underscore the importance of a viable airport in regional development. Without diminishing the importance of General Aviation, Commercial, scheduled and unscheduled (charter) freight and passenger services provide the best opportunity for growth based on the expanded use of resort and industry in the Region.

Future planning and development must balance the need for peak capacity against down season periods of inactivity. To accomplish this effectively will call for expansion that makes timely investments, air service that can flex with the travel season, and a serviceable, economically feasible year-round airport that generates revenue and serves businesses, residents and tourists.

## MEETING CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

The major issue is unstable funding, particularly the subsidy for essential air service, which makes commercial operation feasible for residents and visitors to the Region. If passenger service is not cost-effective, the flexibility to change to more business-oriented operation is essential.

The Region's accessibility to air travel is reasonably good for a primarily rural area, but it is likely to become more crucial for both businesses and tourism. Accessibility to the airport is limited to vehicles. Passenger air transportation should connect to the public transportation system, allowing for seamless and more affordable travel through the Region, particularly for tourists traveling to Killington.

Management must insure that growth, especially in the current regulatory environment, will occur to meet current and future challenges in operating and



Rutland State Airport, US Route 7 and VT Route 103, and Green Mountain Rail

RRPC GIS—NAIP, 2003 data

maintaining the airport. This management involves master planning and the environmental assessments required to design and construct projects in a timely manner.

Future scheduled airliners serving Rutland will be bigger, faster and heavier putting increased demands for facilities, maintenance and manpower on the airport. Unless operational and regulatory standards are met, the airport will not remain viable.

Marketing of existing services is also needed to help realize their potential.

Major facility improvements will be the F.A.A.-mandated extension of the safety areas at each end of the main runway. The extension of then paved runway to 6000 feet is also needed.

Continued improvement in the airport's instrument approach capability is also needed. Although a precision approach is still needed, approach improvements so far have allowed airlines the opportunity to provide reliable service to the Region and a chance to return a profit. New navigational equipment could be in place as early as 2007, reducing the aircraft operating minimums to 400 feet altitude

and ½ mile visibility on the existing special approach, thereby improving reliability.

Terminal space and automobile parking are adequate for the short term, but expansion will be necessary to meet projected demands. The terminal is in phase two of a five phase renovation to meet new security requirements and to provide an open and unique gateway into the Region.

Hangar space is still at a premium with no new sites identified. The total number of aircraft is expected to grow roughly 40 percent and reach 59 by the year 2018.

## **RUTLAND RPC ACTIONS**

- Support recommendations of Vermont's Airport Capital Plan
- Seek support for air projects with local, regional and State governments and organizations., particularly the partially completed MALSR lighting, to reduce the approach minimums and subsequently improve reliability.
- Review land uses and zoning adjacent to transportation projects; work with local decisions-makers to address conflicts,