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## OUR VIEW

# Piper Airport: The impact goes well beyond dollars

We've patiently waited to see reactions to comments that the historic William T. Piper Memorial Airport in Lock Haven benefits only a few, and that the city's investment in the airport is a losing proposition.

How short-sighted.

Yet, we're glad the airport is a topic of public discussion and debate — its importance and impact cannot be overstated.

Let's look at the facts as offered by the most recent Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Bureau of Aviation study of "The Economic Impact of Aviation in Pennsylvania" that covered all of the state's commercial and general aviation airports.

Approximately 50 people are employed at the airport, public but mostly private, generating an annual payroll of approximately \$1.9 million.

Average annual visitors to Piper are counted at just under 3,800.

Each spends an average \$30, according to the study, thus annual spending here by visitors coming in and out of Piper is calculated at about \$112,000.

The local airport's total output — essentially all of the dollars that can be traced to the facility — is estimated at \$6.8 million annually.

Moreover, and as an example, recent letter writers associated with Lock Haven Aircraft Sales & Air Parts located at Piper reveal that that family-owned firm employs 15 people, most of whom live in this area.

Then there is AvSport of Lock Haven, one of only three flight schools in the state to specialize in sport pilot training. Its owner said his firm contributed \$35,160 directly to the city's coffers in the form of aircraft fuel sales and office and hangar rent, and an additional \$234,629 to local entities in the form of sales and use taxes accruing to the state, the local public school district, banks and via materials and services purchased from local vendors.

Then there is Piper Aviation Museum — Lock Haven's connection to the world.

And while the annual Sentimental Journey to Cub Haven fly-in can be assessed in terms of its economic impact, what cannot be measured is the pride this event inspires as it celebrates Lock Haven's heritage. A side note: There is 8,000 square feet of office space available at the museum for lease.

More needs to be done to promote the museum. For example, we wonder why there are no signs along Interstate 80 directing motorists to the museum.

All of these figures and facts — and there are more — are versus the \$70,000 "deficit" the city invests into the general aviation airport beyond the airport's actual revenues.

The fact is, this local airport and others are not only important to businesses, they support tourism, agriculture, emergency medical services, the military, and public safety. Airports help to support services that are vital to us all.

So why, then, is not the discussion centered more around how to leverage the airport to enhance safety, quality of life and economic development?

Perhaps a task force is called for, a group of public and private stakeholders to discuss how to bring more business and activity to Piper Airport.

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