

THE COUNTY LINE



Okaloosa County Wants SouthwestToVPS County Commissioners Approve Resolution

At the September 1 County Commission Meeting, commissioners approved a resolution in support of the community initiative of “SouthwestToVPS,” to help garner support and pledges which will assist in bringing Southwest Airlines to Northwest Florida Regional Airport. We are the obvious selection for several reasons:

1. We would be right in between Panama City and Pensacola, making only one location necessary; saving Southwest Airlines resources in terms of aircraft, ground personnel and equipment.
2. Because of our joint use with Eglin AFB, airport related costs are the lowest of any airport being considered on the Gulf Coast.
3. Northwest Florida Regional Airport’s upgraded facilities are ready for Southwest to move in *today*.
4. We have the U.S. Army’s 7th Special Forces Group and the new F-35, Joint Strike Fighter Initial Joint Training Site, along with their families coming soon and adding approximately 10,000 people. Combine that with all the other military installations that currently exist and the addition of 700 personnel, including family members for the V-22 Osprey at Hurlburt. (The 33rd Fighter Wing personnel loss was deducted from these figures.)
5. These military members travel constantly, and need competitive fares that Southwest can offer. Furthermore, these added families will bring more people coming to visit and more will decide to stay or retire here.

The financial impact is far reaching and will result in tens of millions of dollars in annual economic stimulus. Call your local chamber of commerce, visit www.SouthwestToVPS.com or search for Southwest To VPS Facebook page.

Overall, the Okaloosa County Airports are soaring high, and are known for their friendly customer service. Northwest Florida Regional Airport has been making substantial improvements over the last several years. We now have a new rental car facility, refueling area and cargo facility. The airport has 84 commercial flight slots and is currently using 54; therefore, there is still room for expansion and the current lease agreement with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) is through 2032. We currently have the longest runways on the Gulf Coast at 10,000 and 12,000 feet – a great benefit to our local economy and the USAF.

The airport works closely with the military which represent 70 percent of our local economy. We just dedicated an F-15 Static Display at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport, which visitors and residents cannot miss, upon arrival or departure. Additionally, we created a military “gathering place” inside the airport, with the help of the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee.

Help us continue the tradition – visit SouthwestToVPS.com,
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