

# The County Line & Current Events

## Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners

Recent news that Vision Airlines is making changes to their schedule effective February 29, 2012 has generated some confusion within the local media and has mischaracterized that the company is outright leaving Northwest Florida.

It is important for our customers, business partners, and community to understand the facts that the company has decided to move its aircraft fleet back to Las Vegas to provide service to the Grand Canyon and is currently contemplating the future spring and summer schedule. We have a written operating agreement with Vision Airlines in place until September 30, 2013 but ultimately it is the company's decision where and how often they fly.

While the company ponders its future schedules, we wanted to emphasize the bigger picture – the importance of having a supportive environment for sustaining or creating new business development in Northwest Florida. Now more than ever, we ask for your understanding and patience. Premature speculation will not benefit the community.

Over 4,500 direct and indirect jobs are attributed to the airport as well as an annual economic impact to the region of over \$509 million. This is all accomplished without general taxes. Our success as a transportation gateway is entirely based upon revenue from our customers and the 64 businesses that operate at our facilities. Our airport is financially self-sustaining with all revenue reinvested back into the airport's infrastructure.

Moreover, our airport system is a key element to the entire community. While the competitiveness of other airports in the region often takes turns – the consumer ultimately wins and benefits greatly from having choices. Businesses benefit from accessibility and the services offered by our five airlines and six rental car companies at Northwest Florida Regional Airport.

Remember the summer of 2010 and the uncertainty of the oil spill? Since then and particularly last summer, Vision Airlines accommodated over 155,868 passengers and created national attention to our area as a prime tourism destination. We know that many people came to Northwest Florida for the very first time, while others increased the frequency or length of their visits – entirely due to improved air service. In fact, Northwest Florida Regional Airport broke its 54 year record last year with 900,562 passengers. These same passengers spend money in our restaurants, hotels, and shops.

Joint advertising and marketing ventures were provided to sustain the new service last year in many markets. The message was clear – come to Northwest Florida first, via Vision Airlines second. The expense of these advertising campaigns were paid from airport generated funds or specific TDC sources.



Looking forward, we are having dialogue with a wide range of new companies and multiple business development prospects with existing companies that will offer the traveling public even more choices.

We salute Vision Airlines and all the businesses that work hard to make transportation to Northwest Florida convenient and affordable. As a team, we need to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit and prove our commitment towards improving air service and ultimately our community.

**As our customer, we hope that you will travel with us in the near future.**

**NORTHWEST  
FLORIDA**



**REGIONAL  
AIRPORT**

A SERVICE OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

