



## FRANKLIN COUNTY STATE AIRPORT

### 1. Airport Background and Location

Franklin County State Airport is located near Swanton, Vermont in the northwest portion of the State. The airport is actually located in the Town of Highgate, northeast of Swanton. The proximity of this airport to Burlington allows the airport to function somewhat like a reliever airport for Burlington International Airport. Franklin County State Airport's role as a reliever represents some of the present use of the airport, as well as potential for increased future use.

Access to the Franklin County State Airport is via Route 78, which intersects I-89 in Swanton. The market area for the airport is bounded, more or less by the Canadian border to the north, St. Albans to the south, Swanton to the west, and Enosburg Falls to the east. Besides the communities of Franklin County, the airport also serves Grand Isle County which does not have its own public-use airport. Discussions with the airport manager/FBO indicate that there are some pilots from the Burlington area who prefer to operate out of Franklin County State Airport in order to avoid congestion at Burlington. These discussions also indicate that the airport's market area could be expanded into Canada. Active marketing, he believes, could attract Canadian businesses and pilots to the area and increase the usage of the airport.

Access to the Swanton/St. Albans area is dominated by Interstate 89. I-89 connects Vermont with Canada to the north and New Hampshire to the east. In the northwest portion of Vermont, I-89 runs north-south, connecting Burlington to Canada, and passing through both St. Albans and Swanton. Major east-west arteries in the area include Route 78 and Route 105. I-89 has both positive and negative effects on the airport. The access to Burlington that I-89 provides to the area's residents often draws potential users from the Franklin County State Airport to the Burlington International Airport. However, the access to Franklin County State Airport that I-89 provides to the residents of Burlington, sometimes draws general aviation pilots and aircraft from Burlington International Airport to Franklin County State Airport. Air traffic at Burlington is much greater than the traffic at most

general aviation airports, therefore circling and taxiing times at Burlington may be much longer than at general aviation airports. In many cases, pilots decide that it is worth driving out of Burlington to use personal aircraft based at airports other than Burlington International. Use of Franklin County State avoids slowdowns caused by larger amounts of traffic at the Burlington International Airport.

## **2. Facilities and Activity**

The airfield consists of one paved runway, 3000 feet in length. Franklin County has a large based aircraft population: 53 aircraft in total, 46 of which are single-engine piston planes. There are six Canadian-owned aircraft based at the airport full time, and 11 aircraft based at Franklin County Airport whose owners live in Chittenden County. Of the approximately 21,400 takeoffs or landings recorded in 2001, 17,000 or 80 per cent were local operations, meaning a takeoff and landing at the same airport, with 2900 itinerant and 1500 military operations. Though the airport's flight school and aircraft rental business were forced to close due to insurance premium increases, flight lessons do continue with private instructors in students' own planes. Landside facilities at the airport include a terminal building, auto parking, and several hangars.

Transient traffic at the airport is served by taxi and car rental services in St. Albans. A rental will be left at the airport for arriving customers if prior notice is given.

## **3. Airport Related Economic Uses**

Review of this airport indicates that many benefit from the access to aviation transportation that the airport's facilities provide. The area's largest employers, Fonda Container, Missisquoi Paper, and Union Carbide, do not base aircraft at the airport, but use its facilities to transport executives, customers, and machine parts. Several other smaller businesses also benefit from the airport. A brick company located less than a mile from the airport frequently uses it to transport products to customers who are time dependent. Some local car dealerships use the airport to inspect automobiles for potential purchase and sale on their lot. Contractors working on construction projects in the area use the airport on a weekly business to inspect the progress of projects. The airport manager also indicates that insurance companies and the

Duty Free Shop use the airport several times per year. An aerial photography business also operates an aircraft out of the airport.

Those familiar with the airport indicate that the business usage of the airport could be expanded if several steps were taken. The airport's proximity to the Canadian border makes it ideal for attracting cross-border business traffic. Franklin County State Airport is the closest American airport to Montreal; there is a substantial amount of air traffic related trans-border business dealings. Active marketing of the airport facilities could attract businesses from both the U.S. and Canada to base aircraft at the airport or to land at the facilities for access to both American and Canadian markets. Discussion also indicates that there is a business-user and general aviation market in Burlington that could be tapped for increased usage of the airport. As air ambulance, FedEx, UPS, and scheduled passenger services increase at the Burlington International Airport, corporate and general aviation users might look to base aircraft elsewhere. The access that I-89 provides to the airport could allow businesses and citizens in Burlington to base aircraft at the Franklin County State Airport, thereby avoiding increased traffic at the Burlington International Airport.

#### **4. Other Airport Benefits**

This airport adds in several ways to the areas quality of life. The Franklin County State Airport is used by the Vermont State Police for drug enforcement operations and by pilots performing both agricultural and mosquito spraying. Community events held at the airport include air shows and antique car shows. The State of Vermont also owns land adjacent to the airport where the Franklin County Fairgrounds are located. On these fairgrounds, members of the Abenaki, a local Native-American tribe, hold annual ceremonies, while concerts, tractor pulls, and county fairs are also held. The lands of both the airport and fairground have been used frequently in the past to hold large concerts. Tens of thousands of spectators have attended Grateful Dead, Phish, and flood relief concerts held on these grounds in the last fifteen years.

The U.S. Border Patrol recently began using the airport on a daily basis, and an ACE Camp takes place annually at Franklin County Airport. The local Experimental Aircraft Association is very active and sponsors frequent fly-ins at the airport, drawing aviation enthusiasts from miles around.

<b>Airport Report:</b>		<b>Franklin County Airport</b>	
Code:		FSO	
City/Town:		Highgate	
County:		Franklin	
Aircraft Operations (take-offs and landings)		Airport Passengers	
Commercial	0	Commercial	0
Itinerant General Aviation	2,900	General Aviation	5,510
Military	1,500		
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>5,510</b>
			<b>Total Output: Business Sales and Public Sector Expenditure</b>
<b>Economic Impact Category</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Payroll (Wages)</b>	
<b>On-Airport Primary Impact (1*)</b>			
Airport Management and Airlines	1	\$19,112	\$35,000
On-Airport Passenger Service	0	\$0	\$0
On-Airport Freight Service	0	\$0	\$0
Other Aviation Services	13	\$238,436	\$810,144
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>\$257,548</i>	<i>\$845,144</i>
<b>Off Airport Primary Impact</b>			
Off-Airport Visitor Spending (2*)	8	\$83,974	\$224,940
Off-Airport Aviation-Dependent Business Activity (3*)	0	\$0	\$0
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>\$83,974</i>	<i>\$224,940</i>
<b>Spin-Off Effects (4*) of Airports:</b>			
<i>On Local Economy</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>\$114,420</i>	<i>\$346,707</i>
<i>On Statewide Economy</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>\$159,827</i>	<i>\$538,728</i>
<b>Vermont Airports Total Economic Impact</b>			
<b>On Own Local Economies Only</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>\$455,942</b>	<b>\$1,416,791</b>
<b>On Statewide Economy</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>\$501,349</b>	<b>\$1,608,812</b>

\* Numbers refer to steps detailed in Section 5: Methodology and Findings

In the table above, the estimated number of itinerant general aviation aircraft operations is presented because these operations estimates drove calculations of out-of-state visitors and visitor spending in Vermont. Local general aviation operations (taking off and landing at the same airport, such as touch-

and-go activity), in contrast, were not used to calculate visitors to the State and so are not shown in the table.

### **Economic Impacts**

Public-use airports in Vermont, along with tenant businesses on airport property, contribute measurable benefits to their local areas and to the State economy through business activity that occurs on airport property. This activity is termed the **on-airport primary impact**, and was determined in this Study through visits and interviews with airport managers and tenant business owners.

Airports also provide direct benefits for businesses located off airport property. The **off-airport primary impact** has two components: expenditures by visitors to the State arriving by way of its airports, and off-airport businesses that depend partially or wholly on use of aviation services for transport.

Spending by out-of-state visitors to Vermont adds sales and jobs among off-airport businesses such as hotels, restaurants and retail establishments. Visitor expenditure impact was determined through a calculation of airport visitors and average expenditures as determined in surveys during airport visits.

The airport-dependent business impact was assessed through a mail survey to local businesses. The response rate to this survey varied widely around the State. Among those businesses that responded, the economic importance of airports to their activity is captured by the Study. However, because many businesses did not respond, it should be noted that the numbers are still a conservative estimate of the public-use airports' economic impact; further, directly comparing airport total impacts may yield counter-intuitive results due to the differing response rates of local businesses across the State. For a more relevant comparison of airport economic impacts by individual airport, which separates out this effect, please see Exhibit 12A.

Each dollar that an airport adds directly into an economy (the primary impact, described in the paragraphs above) continues to circulate through that economy. The re-spending of these dollars in consecutive rounds magnifies the total impact of the single dollar. This additional economic activity is

termed the **spin-off impact**. The Study employed IMPLAN to build a model of each local economy, as well as the statewide economy, in order to calculate spin-off impacts.

The total economic impact of each airport is the sum of the primary on-airport impact, the primary off-airport impact and the spin-off impact.

The airport report above presents both the local economic impact in the airport's own community, and its statewide economic impact. The difference lies in the spin-off impact, which is different for a local economy than for the State as a whole.

The local spin-off impact is somewhat smaller than the statewide spin-off impact, because the State economy is larger than local economies and captures a greater percentage of each round of respending. Both impact measures are relevant in different contexts, for example, a State policy maker may find the statewide impact of the airport most relevant for his or her purposes, while a local development official may be most concerned with the total local impact.