

8. SUGGESTED MARKETING PLAN FOR STUDY RESULTS

The ‘marketing’ of the Study refers to an effort to publicize and make Vermonters aware of its findings.

As a complement to the Economic Impact Study results, a coordinated roll-out of the Study designed to raise awareness about public-use airports is proposed. This value-added effort is meant to raise the profile of VTrans, as well as that of the overall system of public-use airports in the Green Mountain State.

The successful implementation of an effective communications campaign at the conclusion of the Study is designed to accomplish the following straightforward goal:

- Increase the awareness among all targeted groups of the importance of Vermont’s public-use airports to the local and state economies.

Marketing the results of this Study can be carried out simultaneously on two tracks: a statewide effort by VTrans staff should target policymakers and legislators to make them aware of the Study’s findings. At the same time, the results of the Study can also be publicized at the local level by facility managers and other interested groups, to raise awareness of their airports’ beneficial impact among their fellow members of the community.

Statewide Level – Publicizing Study Results

At the statewide level, the effort to publicize the results of this Study should focus on law- and policy-makers, and include the following measures:

- Develop message points for inclusion in relevant communications materials of transportation, planning and economic development agencies throughout the State.
- Create a generic press kit for individual airports to distribute to their local media outlets – provide customized inserts for each airport along with executive summary and technical document on CD-ROM.

- Identify key policy and decision makers, and the audiences that have the most influence upon them, i.e. opinion leaders at state, regional and local levels.
- Identify media outlets statewide.
- Set up meetings with relevant government agency officials, legislative officials and local leaders.
- Meet with editorial boards at news outlets throughout the State. Invite policy makers and appropriate elected officials to participate.
- Identify respected third-parties to author Op-Ed pieces in major newspapers.
- Develop a database of target audience members for follow-up communication and to track results.

Local Level – Publicizing Study Results

In addition to publicizing the findings of this Study among Vermont's decision makers, it can also be used to promote a general awareness of airports' importance among the public at large, an effort which is best pursued at the local level.

- Many of the measures identified for a state-wide campaign can be replicated at the local level. For example, airport managers should seek to ensure coverage of this Study's findings in local presses. The hard numbers presented might be supplemented by soliciting an Op-Ed piece from a local citizen, for example, who had been medically evacuated from the airport, to emphasize the importance of the facility beyond abstract dollar figures.
- An executive summary pamphlet containing the condensed findings of the Study has been produced. This pamphlet is inexpensive to copy and was intended for the widest dissemination possible. Each airport should be certain to maintain a large supply of these executive summaries and keep them at points of entrance, exit, congregation at their facilities. Supplies should also be deposited at the local post office, library, and any other public places that a facility manager considers appropriate.

- Bringing more members of the public onto the airport property will enhance knowledge about the facility, including the findings of this report, not to mention general goodwill in airport-community relations. The number of ways to encourage the public to visit the airport is bounded only by creativity of local facility employees and interested local groups.

While not every airport in the State can host the U.S. Air Force's Blue Angels for an afternoon (as Burlington has), there are many simpler ways to attract the community. Many airports already sponsor open houses, which should be continued.

- In addition, airport facilities often have a great deal of indoor and outdoor space at their disposal, that could be lent to community groups for meetings or activities without detracting from the safety or efficiency of airport operations. Such space may consist of a modern conference room, or simply an out-of-the-way corner of a hangar with some folding chairs. It is recommended that facility managers make an inventory of their available public meeting spaces, and publicize their availability to community groups.

When large groups visit, an airport employee may take a few minutes to introduce the facility, hand out executive summaries, and emphasize the economic engine that it represents.

- Current airport users should be encouraged to contact State policy makers to express their support for continued investment in Vermont's aviation infrastructure, including their own airport, and cite the findings of the Study. The airport might provide form letters containing the relevant information, however, it should be noted that form letters do not have the same impact as original compositions. Therefore, the airport should pull together 'writing points' sheets that include the relevant information from this Study, and names and addresses of State and local lawmakers, that an individual can use to compose a brief letter.

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