

## Chapter 9 Aviation

This chapter provides an overview of aviation activity and planning in the two-county area since the 2005 LRTP update. The most recent regional aviation plan was completed in 1993. The regional aviation goals and objectives from the 1993 Herkimer-Oneida Counties Regional Airport System Plan (RASP) are listed in Exhibit 9-1. Subsequent events, e.g., the closure of several airports existing at that time, support the need to develop an updated RASP.



### REGIONAL AVIATION

#### Air Passenger Transportation

Although Oneida County no longer has commercial air passenger service, there is service about one hour to the west and about an hour and half to the east of Utica.

Albany International Airport in Albany, NY is 76 miles from Utica and is operated by The Albany County Airport Authority, which was created by Albany County in 1993. It is served by Air Canada, American, American Eagle, Continental Connection, Delta, Northwest, Southwest, United/United Express, and USAirways/USAirways Express/Metrojet. According to the Albany County Airport Authority, the Albany International Airport enplaned 1,558,656 passengers in 2004; 1,552,536 passengers in 2005; 1,447,553 in 2006; 1,440,385 in 2007; and 1,380,483 in 2008. They forecast that in 2010 they will enplane 1,375,746 passengers; 1,403,399 in 2012; and 1,519,680 passengers in 2020.

Syracuse Hancock International Airport in Syracuse, NY is 44 miles from Utica and is operated by The City of Syracuse. It is served by American Eagle, Continental, Delta, JetBlue, Northwest, United Express, and USAirways. Other airlines that operate at the Airport include Comair (a Delta affiliate), CommutAir (a Continental affiliate), Allegheny, Mesa, Trans States, Colgan Air, Piedmont, Chautauqua, and Shuttle America (affiliates of USAirways). According to the City of Syracuse's Department of Aviation, Hancock International Airport enplaned 1,135,713 passengers in 2004; 1,228,991 passengers in 2005; and 1,113,040 passengers in 2006. They

forecast that in 2012 they will enplane 1,242,667 passengers and 1,691,456 passengers in 2022.

### **Aviation Trends/National Trends**

In its “FAA Aerospace Forecast, Fiscal Years 2009-2025,” the Federal Aviation Administration presented the following “Forecast Highlights”:

- The FAA forecasts long term aviation growth, despite global economic conditions. Since 2000, U.S. airlines have dealt with the impacts of 9/11, the bankruptcy of four network carriers, and record high fuel prices. In spite of these challenges, the number of passengers traveling continues to grow over the long term.
- The 2009 forecast for commercial aviation calls for a sharp decline in activity in the near term, with a return to growth over the long term.
- In the domestic market, capacity drops 9.0 percent in 2009 to mark the largest percentage decline in available seat miles since deregulation of the industry in 1978. Mainline carrier capacity will decline 9.5 percent.
- For the regional carriers, FAA projects domestic capacity will drop 5.5 percent from 2008 levels – a turnaround from recent periods of reduced air travel demand which saw regional capacity expand as mainline carriers transferred capacity to their lower-cost regional code-share partners.
- Air traffic will not rise to prior forecast levels even when the economy recovers because of the absence of significant price cuts. The FAA does not anticipate a return to previously forecasted passenger levels even when recovery takes hold.
- The downturn in the economy has dampened the near-term prospects for the general aviation industry.
- Longer-term, the FAA sees growth in business aviation demand driven by a growing U.S. and world economy. As the fleet grows, the number of general aviation hours flown is projected to increase an average of 1.8 percent a year through 2025.

### **State Airport System Plan**

In 1998 NYSDOT undertook the preparation of a State Airport System Plan (SASP). Building largely from regional system plans that had been previously completed, the SASP included a series of separate, but interrelated, technical steps designed to identify future development needs for the State airport system.

In November 2003, a NYSDOT “New York Statewide Airport Economic Benefits Study” (Wilbur Smith Associates, R.A. Wiedmann & Associates, 2003) relates aviation activities to the importance to the New York State economy and addresses the impact of the 9/11 tragedy on New York State aviation. This study relates the strengthening of aviation infrastructure to the ongoing economic recovery in New York State. The study underscores the need for continued public support for State airports as a state policy because of the broad range of economic benefits that aviation provides.

Figure 9-1. Regional Aviation Objectives

<b>1993 - REGIONAL AVIATION SYSTEMS PLAN (RASP)</b>
<b>GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b>
<p><b>Physical Development Goal</b> Provide for the development of needed aviation facilities and services consistent with, and complementary to, local economic (mobility needs) and social development and in a manner that reflects full awareness of the environment.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Be compatible with local land use plans and patterns.</li><li>2. Minimize adverse environmental effects, such as noise.</li><li>3. Provide for optimum use of both publicly and privately owned aviation facilities.</li><li>4. Meet acceptable performance standards for parameters, such as aircraft delay.</li><li>5. Meet acceptable physical development standards established by federal, state, and local governments, as well as criteria for the aviation industry.</li><li>6. Complement mobility efforts and other modes of transportation.</li></ol>
<p><b>Social Goal</b> <b>Provide facilities and services available to all citizens in a manner that maximizes safety, efficiency, and opportunity for use.</b></p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Is responsive to the needs of aviation users.</li><li>2. Incorporates locations, facilities, and features necessary for safe use and operation of the system.</li><li>3. Provides necessary facilities and services while minimizing community disruption and individual dislocations.</li><li>4. Provides facilities and services on a non-discriminatory basis.</li><li>5. Provides reasonable facilities and services for special users, such as the physically handicapped.</li></ol>
<p><b>Economic Goal</b> <b>Support local and regional economic development while providing the flexibility to accommodate new opportunities and shifts in development patterns.</b></p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Support the duality of airport ownership (public and private) in the region while maintaining the public's access to safe and adequate aviation facilities and services.</li><li>2. Support a fair system of use charges that equitably distributes the burden of capital investment, operational expenses, and maintenance costs between direct users and indirect beneficiaries of the system.</li><li>3. Enhance the opportunities for local economic development and improved employment opportunities consistent with local and regional growth policies and plans.</li></ol>

## Aviation in the HOCTS Planning Area

### Former Oneida County Airport

The progressive loss of commercial air passenger services at the Oneida County Airport (OCA) over the past decade led to the decision, of Oneida County and the Mohawk Valley EDGE, to relocate the OCA to the Griffiss Airfield at Rome, and to seek a consultant study for reuse and redevelopment of the former airport.

According to the Mohawk Valley EDGE, The *Oneida County Business Park Master Plan Update* is the current consultant study that replaces the older *Oneida County Business Park Redevelopment & Reuse Strategy* consultant study. The Mohawk Valley EDGE Report-Summer of 2009 states the Oneida County Business Park in Oriskany is poised for redevelopment. A team of economic and design consultants are preparing a Master Plan for the revitalization of the 2,600 acre Park, which includes a 25-year vision for improvements and development.

The report will consist of four phases: 1) Immediate Action-Improve Airport Road; 2) Focus on the Core; 3) Growth on the Perimeter; and 4) Build Out the Remainder of the Park. The Master Plan will give direction and sets the tone for action. The next step will be to bring the employers in the Park together with the County and local communities.

The Immediate Action phase of the project calls for \$1.7 million of infrastructure improvements, which will address some of the needs of the Park's current tenants. Improvements include road refurbishment, installation of sidewalks and landscaping, and a new Business Park entrance sign.

### Griffiss International Airport

Oneida County has only one publicly-owned, public use airport – Griffiss International Airport at Rome.

The function of the Griffiss International Airport is to provide a safe and well-maintained facility to serve the current and future commercial, corporate, business, governmental, and general aviation needs of Oneida County and the State of New York.

Under the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), Griffiss International Airport is designated as a "General Aviation" airport, which comprises all civil aircraft operations not classified as air carrier or taxi and commuter operations. However, the airport has the infrastructure, not commonly found at a General Aviation airport, necessary to operate as a Commercial Service airport:

- Runway length of 11,820 feet
- Runway Weight Bearing Capacity:
  - 100,000 lbs single wheel
  - 240,000 lbs double wheel
  - 500,000 lbs double tandem
- Hangars capable of housing large-size military and commercial aircraft
- FAA-contract Control Tower
- ARFF "A" and "B" fire-fighting capability
- Precision landing system – ILS and VOR/DME approaches

- Non-Precision landing system – GPS(LPV) approaches
- FAA Part 139, Class IV Certificated.
- TSAR 1542 security compliant.

The Mohawk Valley Community College Aviation Center with its Airframe and Powerplant Technology Program is also located at the airport. This FAA-Certified A&P Program is a 12-month, 1,905-hour training certificate program that emphasizes hands-on experience with maintenance and repair of aircraft engines and structures. Empire Aero Center, a Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility with the capability of servicing large-size military and commercial air carrier aircraft is located at the airport. The MVCC Aviation Center provides entry-level, skilled employees for the Empire Aero Center’s operations.

The airport also has a Million Air FBO providing such services as fuel sales, aircraft parking and tie-downs, hangar management and rentals, service and maintenance of aircraft, and aircraft deicing.

The County Goals and Objectives for the economic development of the Griffiss International Airport are:

- To expand the economic impact of the airport in order to ensure that the county achieves the maximum benefit from the airport’s potential for enhancing economic growth.
- Plan and develop for the airport to become the one-stop, full-service “jet center” for all business jet aircraft.
- Attract airport-based and transient multi-engine and jet aircraft, both personal and business use.
- Attract additional specialized aeronautical commercial enterprises.
- Expand the aeronautical curriculum offered by the MVCC.
- Structure the operations of the airport to be prepared for future passenger air carrier service and/or other certificated aircraft operators.

The airport’s targeted market for economic development is the “business” sector of general aviation, i.e., commercial enterprises other than scheduled air carriers. The non-personal percentage of the GA fleet is only 32.5 %, but it accounts for 65.6% of GA operations; Business and Corporate aircraft use constitutes only 16.1% of GA aircraft, but 23.4% of GA operations (source: U.S. Department of Transportation, FAA Administrator’s Fact Book, April 2007).

Based on FAA projections (Federal Aviation Administration, FAA Aerospace Forecasts — Fiscal Years 2007-2020, March 2007), the numbers of GA piston and turboprop aircraft are expected to remain essentially flat for the foreseeable future. However, the number of GA turbojets is forecast to grow at 6.0% per year. By 2020, it is expected that there will be almost 23,000 GA turbojets in service, compared to an estimate of slightly more than 10,000 in 2006. Turbojet flight activity is expected to grow at an even faster rate of 9.4% annually through 2020. Turbojet flight activity is expected to make up about 31% of all flight hours flown by GA aircraft in 2020, more than double the 14% of the total GA flight hours flown in turbojets in 2005. By 2020, total turbine operations — which include turbojets, turboprops, and turbine rotorcraft — are expected to make up 48% of all GA flight activity, compared to about 31% in 2005.

Important to the future of the Griffiss International Airport is the protection of its airspace by ensuring adjacent land use compatibility. FAR Part 77 height restrictions will be the starting point for delineating the airport’s impact zone. Additional regulations should be based upon Noise Contours and NTSB Aircraft Accident Safety Zone Data, and include the following considerations:

- Aviation Easements
  - A right-of-way for free and unobstructed passage of aircraft through the airspace over the property at any altitude above an imaginary surface specified in the easement (usually set in accordance with FAR Part 77 criteria).
  - A right to subject the property to noise, vibration, fumes, dust, and fuel particle emissions associated with normal airport activity.
  - A right to prohibit the erection or growth of any structure, tree, or other object that would enter the acquired airspace.
  - A right-of-entry onto the property, with appropriate advance notice, for the purpose of removing, marking or lighting any structure or other object that enters the acquired airspace.
  - A right to prohibit electrical interference, glare, misleading lights, visual impairments, and other hazards to aircraft flight from being created on the property.
- Protecting Instrument Approach arrival and departure routes
- Safety Compatibility Zones based on NTSB accident data
- Visual and electronic hazards
- Wildlife attractant hazards
- High risk uses (e.g. schools and hospitals)
- Sound insulation building standards for new construction
- Real Estate transactions to include airport impact disclosure

### Financing the Aviation Plan

The Griffiss International Airport is funded within the Operating and Capital budgets of the County of Oneida. Financial resources include the operating revenue from land leases, hangar leases, building/office space lease, facility use fees, fuel flowage fees, service fees, and commercial concession fees. Capital projects are funded through FAA and NYS DOT Aviation Bureau grants and the sale of bonds by the County.

Funding for the current Airport Capital Improvement Program for the Griffiss International Airport (2010-2014) is summarized in Figure 9-2.

Figure 9-2. Griffiss International Airport Capital Improvement Funding, 2010 – 2014

Discretionary	Federal		State	County	Total
	MAP	Entitlement			
\$19,966,250	\$28,405,000	\$750,000	\$1,292,660	\$1,292,660	<b>\$51,706,580</b>

Source: Oneida County Aviation Department

## **SUMMARY**

Aviation will continue to be an important transportation alternative for both passengers and freight. HOCTS supports continued improvements to the Griffiss International Airport, and will follow the progress of the revitalization of the former Oneida County Airport, now the Oneida County Business Park. Considering the significant changes in aviation facilities and plans in the Herkimer-Oneida Counties area, the RASP study will need to be updated to reflect those changes and incorporate future plans.

## Findings and Recommendations

### Findings

- The former Oneida County Airport is designated for reuse and redevelopment under the *Oneida County Business Park Master Plan Update*, according to the Mohawk Valley EDGE.
- Griffiss International Airport will be the only public-owned, public use aviation facility within the area.
- Commercial passenger service is available from Syracuse (~60 miles west) and Albany (~90 miles east).
- There is no near-term prospect for the return of regularly scheduled, air carrier service to the local area.
- The primary business activities at the Griffiss International Airport will be the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) of aircraft.
- The primary focus of economic development at the Griffiss International Airport will be to attract business and corporate aviation, i.e., charter flights, cargo aircraft, and transient aircraft.
- The primary focus of the Capital development of the Griffiss International Airport will be to (1) rehabilitate and maintain the existing infrastructure, and (2) expand the infrastructure to address future needs and opportunities, e.g., a passenger terminal to accommodate charter flights, transient aircraft, and the future possibility of regularly scheduled, air carrier passenger service.
- The protection of the Griffiss International Airport's airspace and approaches from incompatible land uses needs to be addressed.

### Recommendations

- Prepare an updated Regional Aviation Systems Plan (RASP)
- Support effort to use the Griffiss International Airport and associated transportation needs
- Support new uses for the Oneida County Business Park and associated transportation needs
- Explore possible shuttle service needs from Griffiss International Airport to Syracuse or Albany airports
- Support highway and rail access to Griffiss Business and Technology Park