



Economic Development

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Volusia County Airports - Catalysts for Growth



Connecting To The World

by Helga van Eckert, Director,
Volusia County Economic Development



Q. When is an airport more than just place to catch a flight?

- A. When it's extraordinarily convenient and user-friendly.
- A. When it's \$2.1 billion economic impact influences economic development success.
- A. When it's surrounded by prime real estate.
- A. When it's aligned with the world's leading aviation and aerospace university.
- A. When it prioritizes health and safety protocols for its passengers.



Passengers can enjoy Paul Baliker's eagle sculpture "Nature's Way" and a panoramic view of the airfield.

Often overlooked or undervalued, airports play a key role in maintaining and growing the local economy, whether international, national or general aviation, each facility type has its own impact. As magnets for business and trade, the availability of air services are critical to attracting corporate and regional headquarters, service companies, and manufacturing/R&D facilities. As such, we've dedicated this entire edition of the Volusia County Economic Development Quarterly to our local airports, with a primary focus on the [Daytona Beach International Airport](#). Whether you travel for business or pleasure, read on to learn about Volusia's airports and what makes DAB one of America's best.

What makes DAB so unique among mid-sized airports?

Prime commercial real estate is the hot ticket.



Aviation and aerospace companies that are expanding or looking to relocate often require a site close to a commercial airport. For companies considering Volusia County, the sites on or near DAB command attention in the marketplace.

“DAB is a prime business location in many ways. As a regional international airport, businesses that locate here have all the conveniences of a larger hub operation with the added bonus of individualized attention,” said Helga van Eckert, Volusia County’s Director of Economic Development, which is located inside the airport.

Most of us are familiar with the airport’s 890 acres that lie within the airfield fence, and include the terminal building, gates, taxiways and runways. But the airport’s footprint is actually 2,000 acres which includes property that is currently leased to commercial tenants or available for lease.

DAB has approximately 50 leasehold agreements with various tenants. Among them are Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU), Daytona International Speedway, NASCAR, Brown & Brown Insurance, the city of Daytona Beach, Volusia County Government, Hampton Inn, Hilton Garden Inn, Residence Inn, Houligan’s Sports Grille, Outback Steakhouse, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Volusia County School Board, several rental car companies, and three fixed-base operators that serve general and corporate aviation.



Commercial tenants at DAB include hotels, aviation services and more.

“These agreements make DAB very dynamic among similarly sized airports and a successful enterprise fund, which means DAB generates its own revenues and is not dependent upon ad valorem tax dollars for operations,” said Rick Karl, Director of Aviation and Economic Resources for Volusia County Government. *Continued on the next page...*

It's a complex business with a substantial budget, typically about \$12 million a year, not including government revenues that fund special projects. At least next year – and possibly through 2024 – the budget will be adjusted to account for the expected impact of the pandemic on air travel.

Other factors that make DAB stand apart from the larger airports include the overwhelming satisfaction ratings by passengers, the number of aircraft operations each month, the mix of tenants on airport property, and the collaborative relationships with ERAU and the FAA.

Travelers consistently rank DAB very high in regards to the customer experience, and collaborative relationships with the FAA and ERAU allow for an environment of high-tech research and development in the aviation and aerospace fields and the development of the next generation of air traffic control. The university has direct access to the airport's runways which exists at only a few airports nationwide. The ERAU John Mica Engineering and Aerospace Innovation Complex (aka MicaPlex) houses many companies that are engaged in aviation and aerospace. New tenants of the MicaPlex include Arralis and Printech Circuit Laboratories, both engaged in the aerospace industry. Another firm, Power Flow Systems, recently expanded operations at a site very near DAB.



Airport tenants serve locals as well as visitors to the area.

The number of aircraft operations makes DAB among Florida's busiest airports. In fact, in recent months, DAB has been ranked as the number one busiest airport (takeoffs and landings) in Florida, eclipsing Miami, Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale. In October, for example, there were 20,187 operations, 19,750 of which were movements by general or corporate aircraft. This includes training flight operations by Embry-Riddle and its fleet of 74 aircraft.

Commercial carriers accounted for 429 operations and about 26,000 enplanements, down 47 percent year over year. However, that outperformed the national average decline of 74 percent. Federal officials project it could be 2024 before passenger traffic returns to pre-pandemic levels.

All this adds up to an aviation complex that is not only responsive to consumer markets, but highly engaged in economic development and puts the county's Economic Development offices right in the middle of it.



Area airports serve general and corporate aviation; several feature industrial parks for local businesses.

Convenience & Commerce

Local Volusia County Airports Make A Difference

Two years of preparation had come down this. For Dr. Meister and his Mile High Mayhem team to beat 5-time Class A champion team Zero Tolerance, their last team dive had to be flawless. As they approached the jump site each member mentally rehearsed the rapid moves that would form the “Meeker”, Unipod, Donut, Stardian and other skydive formations during the 35 second freefall. Then it was GO. The routine was near perfect, the landing was spot on and the result was elation. Mile High Mayhem became National Champs by one point in the final round at the National Skydiving League championship, held at the DeLand Municipal Airport!

This special national championship event is just one example of the many ways in which Volusia County’s private and municipal airports contribute to the community’s economic success. At the three largest municipal airports alone, visitor spending is estimated to be \$60 million annually. In the most recent economic impact studies performed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the county’s small airports contributed, directly and indirectly, to the employment of 5,500 people with a payroll of \$340 million. Also, according to FDOT, the total economic output produced as the result of having these small airport operations is estimated to be nearly \$1 billion per year.

There are 11 private and four municipal airports in the county offering commercial and industrial sites, chartered transportation, business and aviation services, leisure and recreational activities and in some cases, just personal convenience. Though runways and aircraft are at the core of each airport’s mission, several do much more.

The [DeLand Municipal Airport](#) accommodates all types of general aviation aircraft and, through sport aviation and skydiving, it has built a reputation as Central Florida’s premier recreational airport. DeLand is also home to one of the County’s largest airport industrial parks with the new 100-acre extension called the Northwest Industrial Business Park adding several more green field sites ranging from 2 – 35 acres. *Continued on next page...*

The [Ormond Beach Municipal Airport](#) primarily supports recreational flying and flight training, including roto-craft. It is adjacent to an expanding Airport Business Park, which is convenient to interstate highway I-95 and is already home to several advanced manufacturing companies in the medical technology, automotive and laboratory equipment industries.

[New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport](#) has three intersecting runways and can accommodate mid-sized, general aviation aircraft. The airport is home to a commuter air carrier, a flight training academy and several aircraft restoration companies.

[Massey Ranch Airpark](#) is a coastal fly-in community featuring a paved and lighted runway with a residential section on the east side and commercial/industrial section on the west side. All properties have direct taxiway access. The commercial/industrial area has been zoned for both aviation and non-aviation related businesses and support services.

Small airports offer convenience and bring unique capabilities to help expand local commerce. As home to specialized aviation business and recreation and as a primary location for commercial and industrial development these airports are an integral part of Volusia County's current and future economy.

To learn more about business opportunities at any of our local airports, please contact Volusia County Economic Development at 386-248-8048 or vced@volusia.org.



Did You Know?

- As an enterprise fund, DAB generates its own revenues from fees collected from tenants. No local taxpayer funds are used to operate the facility.
- With more than 326,000 takeoffs and landings in 2019, DAB consistently ranks in the top five of the busiest airports in Florida each year.
- Airport Director Karen Feaster is a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and joined the DAB team as a volunteer intern in 1992. In her 28 year career, she has worked in nearly every department of the airport— from properties and finance, administration and projects and many positions in-between. She is an Accredited Airport Executive as certified by the American Association of Airport Executives.
- Years ago, as a youth, Volusia County Director of Aviation and Economic Resources Rick Karl took his instrument ground school training and earned his commercial pilot's license at Daytona Beach International Airport.
- DAB has three runways, including its main runway, which is two miles long.
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's flight line of 74 aircraft is adjacent to DAB.
- More than 700,000 passengers fly in or out of DAB in a typical year.
- Air Force One has made several visits to DAB, including one in 2020.



New seasonal nonstops to Dallas, Philadelphia You Can Get There From Here!

Air travel has always been about time and convenience. DAB continues to be the region's preferred airport for anyone seeking nonstop flights to popular destinations without having to endure long drives to larger airports in Orlando, Sanford or Jacksonville. Now, passengers can fly to and from DAB nonstop to Dallas or Philadelphia thanks to the addition of seasonal service to those destinations by American Airlines.

"American Airlines is a great partner, and we are thrilled it is adding new, nonstop service to Daytona Beach International Airport," said Airport Director Karen Feaster. "While this in an uncertain time for the airline industry, it is gratifying that the leadership at American Airlines recognizes the demand for travel to and from the Greater Daytona Beach area."



American Airlines Vice President of Network Planning Brian Znotins underscores that sentiment. "We are pleased to add this new service because we know how important access to our largest hubs is for local residents. And we look forward to bringing more people to Daytona Beach, especially during the colder, winter months."

The additional nonstop routes add convenience for travelers heading north or west. American Airlines also offers daily nonstop service to Charlotte. Delta Air Lines, which has served DAB for more than 40 years, offers nonstop service to Atlanta. And Sunwing Airways offers seasonal nonstop service to Toronto. These nonstop routes and connecting routes boost tourism to the area and serve the growing number of local business professionals who have business interests in those destinations as well as inbound passengers with business interests here in Central Florida.

"Our recent investments in Daytona Beach International Airport and our solid relationships with the airlines contribute to their support of the market in Volusia County and beyond," said George Recktenwald, County Manager for Volusia County Government, which operates the airport. "These new routes not only serve our community, but they attract business travelers, as well as visitors eager to explore all Volusia County has to offer."



Travel Safety in the Age of COVID-19

While airline executives implement strict procedures to ensure the safest possible in-flight environment for passengers, DAB officials have gone above and beyond the standard operating procedures by implementing the DAB Ready To Fly initiative to ensure safety for departing and arriving passengers as well as other guests.

“We have to overcome the challenges of COVID-19,” said Airport Director Karen Feaster. “We all have a responsibility and must adopt new travel practices and follow science-based guidelines. This is the only way to protect our families, friends and others we come in contact with.”

The DAB Ready to Fly initiative includes enhanced cleaning of the terminal, Plexiglas shields at all customer service counters, additional hand sanitizer stations, social distancing markers and public messaging on monitors. There are numerous safety protocols to ensure the safest possible environment for passengers. In July, DAB began distributing the DAB Cares Kits to departing passengers. The kits come with a DAB branded face covering, bottle of hand sanitizer, luggage tag, mints and thank you card. This is just another small way to help passengers feel more at ease as they return to air travel.

“DAB is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for travelers and all who may accompany them to the airport,” said Rick Karl Director of Aviation and Economic Resources for Volusia County Government.



DAB's Master Plan - Visioning and Delivering the Community's Aviation Demands

Airports are not just buildings where people come and go to catch flights. They are economic engines. According to an annual Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) study, in 2019, DAB alone created a \$2.1 billion economic impact. However, this doesn't happen without a strong vision and steadfast implementation of a master plan.

DAB's master plan establishes the guidelines and goals for the efficient operation and development of the airport through a public process. It is founded on substantial research, commercial passenger traffic forecasts, general aviation operations, and input from the community. The plan envisions short- and long-term maintenance and expansion opportunities, considers environmental, socioeconomic and community development factors, and assesses airports and other modes of transportation. Additionally, the master plan is a business plan for the airport's enterprise fund, allowing it to increase and optimize the use of revenues generated from the airlines, car rental companies and other airport tenants.

Highlights from the current plan include development of a 300+ acre private aviation and aerospace industrial park directly south of the airfield, improvement of the secondary and the main crosswind runways, the rehabilitation of pavement and installation of cost-saving LED lighting, and the addition of infrastructure to facilitate future growth. Requiring Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval, strategic planning also positions DAB to obtain substantial grants funding through the FAA and FDOT.

With new business opportunities on airport property being explored regularly, as well as the facility and infrastructure improvements planned, the economic impact of the Daytona Beach International Airport will continue to grow, creating a positive ripple effect across Volusia County.

Photo: Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum



Early aviation activity in the area included air mail service by aircraft such as the Pitcairn Mailwing.

100 Years of Flight

Fewer than ten years after the Wright Brothers achieved sustained flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, barnstorming pilots in their flying machines used Volusia County beaches as a runway, establishing what was the community's first "airport".

It did not take long for that airport to capture the attention of the U.S. Air Mail Service. It commissioned a Pitcairn "Mailwing" airplane to make regular airmail deliveries to the beach. Mailwings were flown extensively by the U.S. Air Mail service beginning in 1927.

In 1928, the "airport" was moved to Bethune Point, along the Halifax River. Eastern Air Transport was certified to fly air mail from Daytona Beach to Orlando and Tampa. Florida State Airways flew passengers to other Florida cities and the Bahamas. In 1930 the airport was moved to its present 740-acre site. Later, during World War II the United States Navy managed the airport as a training site for combat pilots under the name Naval Air Station Daytona Beach. After the war, control of the airport was returned to the City of Daytona Beach as travelers began to favor air travel over rail service. Many of the buildings that had been used by the Navy were later used by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University after it moved to Daytona Beach from Miami.

By 1952 Daytona Beach Airport was very busy with passenger and cargo flights by Eastern Air Lines, National Airlines, governmental airlines, and others. In 1958 a new, modern terminal building and restaurant were built. Daytona Beach Airport became one of the most modern and safest airports in Florida.

Volusia County Government took over ownership and management of what had become "Daytona Beach Municipal Airport" in 1969, renaming it Daytona Beach Regional Airport. Another name change was adopted in 1992 when the facility became Daytona Beach International Airport. At that time, a \$46 million upgrade brought vastly improved facilities, an international terminal and an extension of the main runway to 10,500'. *Continued...*

At various times, DAB has hosted Continental Airlines, US Airways, LTU International Airlines, AirTran Airways, Vintage Props & Jets, JetBlue Airlines, Silver Airways, and other carriers. Today, Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, and Sunwing Airlines offer nonstop and connecting service. The airport also serves its neighbor, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, whose flight line flanks DAB. Additionally, there are three fixed-base operators on DAB property, each serving general and corporate aviation.

Today, the airport is near completion of a \$14 million renovation of the main terminal and parking lots and continues to earn praise for convenience and safety.

"In addition to exceeding customer expectations, it is important that we keep DAB at the leading edge among similar-size airports as we compete for new air service and additional airlines," said Airport Director Karen Feaster. "The more amenities and conveniences we can offer passengers, the more they will choose DAB, which will ultimately result in more choices for air service here."

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