Moving Forward in 2010

By Patricia Malone, Interim Director of Aviation

As we begin a new year, Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport is excited about what lies ahead. This month is the beginning of what we believe will be a great year at our historic landmark. The multi-million dollar Capital Improvement Program, that was announced in 2009, will continue its forward progress with projects that could provide approximately 22,000 jobs for the next few years. During these difficult economic times with unemployment numbers reaching all time highs, this should be good news for our region. Some of these projects are important for the safety of the airport such as the phased $36 million dollar terminal apron rehabilitation (the concrete surface that surrounds the terminal up to and around the aircraft boarding bridges and out to the taxiways) presently under construction and the $10+ million dollar Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Station that broke ground last year. In 2010, a number of our projects will be visible to the public while others will be “behind the scenes”. These projects are important to our surrounding communities for a number of reasons. First, they will enhance the existing airport facility making it safer and more efficient. Next, they will provide jobs and revenue for the airport communities, but most of all they will enhance the quality of life that we know and love in the Greater New Orleans Area and River Parishes. Keep watching for further developments!

A very important “behind the scenes” project – the multi-million dollar Part 1542 Security System is expected to be completed July 1, 2010. When the project is complete, a new Emergency Dispatch Center will have been constructed, the equivalent to a 911 center. Also finished will be a state of the art Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with its own generator rated for 120 mph winds, so it can operate in conditions without commercial power.

Late last year, the New Orleans Aviation Board sold bonds for the construction of a major project – the Consolidated Rental Car Facility (CONRAC). This will be a multi-level building with 1,800 ready return rental car parking spaces. It will provide passengers easier access to rental cars via a walkway connected to the terminal. The cost was originally projected to be $120 million, but may be less due to a favorable construction environment. The anticipated completion date is 2012 with construction set to begin this year.

Air service to the Greater New Orleans Metro area and River Parishes continues to look strong this year, especially in light of the economic downturn that has had a severe impact on the airline industry and airports across the U.S. At this writing, we are served by 10 airlines. Frontier Airlines, which previously served our airport before Hurricane Katrina, is scheduled to return in June with direct non-stop service to Denver.

Armstrong International Airport continues to be a major economic engine for both the local communities and the region. It is a pleasure to serve the Gulf South with jobs, a growing choice of air service and a safe facility.

I hope you have a prosperous and happy New Year.