As I stated last month, on September 15, 2010, I gave my “State of the Airport - 100 Day Report” to the New Orleans Aviation Board in the monthly regular meeting. In that report and my last article, I outlined what I see as areas of concern. These range from staffing issues to projected high costs of enplanements that will have an impact on Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport’s ability to retain and increase air service in the future.

In early August 2009, the New Orleans Aviation Board submitted a preliminary application to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to privatize Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Congress established a demonstration airport privatization program to explore a means of generating access to sources of private capital for airport improvement and development. If it is pursued, the airport would be leased by a private operator and the New Orleans Aviation Board (NOAB), the New Orleans City Council and mayor would be required to approve the lease agreement. The NOAB and the city administration are not obligated to privatize and may withdraw from the process, if deemed necessary or desirable. However, the resolution on whether or not to privatize the airport must take place in the short term and will determine which path we take to improve Armstrong International. In this report, I want to list the some of the objectives that I feel must be considered to successfully move forward.

Assuming there is no privatization, I believe we should focus on a three part strategy to take place over the next six months. The first part is “Operations.”

**Build internal capacity** - We must build internal capacity while rebuilding the “institution” of the airport. This means hiring full-time qualified personnel while reducing reliance on third party contractors and consultants.

**Bid third party contracts** - We should designate a chief procurement officer to assist the airport in soliciting third party contracts, both new and renewals.

**Consolidation of office space** - We should relocate the aviation staff for better supervision, operating efficiency and results. A location for consideration is Concourse A scheduled to be vacant by the end of 2010.

**Maintenance and service agreements** - We should perform a cost benefit analysis on all third party maintenance/service agreements to determine what can be performed by our internal workforce.

**Analyze and evaluate PM/CM contracts** - The current program management and construction management contracts should be evaluated to determine if it is consistent with industry standards and benchmarks.

**Improve customer service** - To improve customer service, we must create a customer service department with oversight of customer service operations in the airport.

**Improve concessions** - We must evaluate our current concessions to determine how service and quality can be improved.

**Cleaning** - We must analyze how to produce better results in the cleaning of the airport, an expenditure of $4.2 million per year. There must also be a 24/7 oversight of the cleaning contract.

**Electronic timekeeping**

*We should replace the manual time keeping system of the New Orleans Aviation Board with an electronic time keeping system.*

**Free parking** - We must institute a parking policy to avoid airport revenue diversion.

Three items I proposed that should be done have already been instituted. First, we have reviewed our overtime procedure and are instituting controls over excessive overtime. Second, we have established the hours of operation for the NOAB staff to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., unless one is on shift work, instead of the irregular hours previously worked. Third, we have decreased take-home cars by 80 percent to only as needed. In my next article, I will cover part III of the strategic plan.

November begins the busy holiday travel season across the country and especially at airports. If you will be traveling on an airline from Armstrong International Airport during the holiday season, you might appreciate some traveling tips to make your travel easier. First, after making your reservations as early as possible to get the best flights and prices, check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website at www.tsa.gov to review any restrictions you may have to board your aircraft. Next, before leaving for the airport, verify your flight is departing on time either by contacting your airline or by visiting the airport website at www.flymsy.com. Lastly, if you are picking up guests at the airport, you may wish to use our free “Cell phone Waiting Lot” located across from the airport on Airline Drive.

We want to make your time spent in our airport as pleasant as possible.

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