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**Sussex County
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News Release

Sussex County Airport earns \$3.7 million in State funding, paving way for runway project

Georgetown, Del., March 8, 2012: Delaware's economic leaders are giving Sussex County clearance to take off on a long-planned airport improvement project, approving more than \$3.7 million in State funding to extend Sussex County Airport's main runway and realign a nearby road.

Members of the Delaware Infrastructure Investment Committee on Thursday, March 8, 2012, unanimously approved an application from PATS Aircraft Systems and Sussex County for a \$3.7 million grant from the Delaware New Jobs Infrastructure Fund, set up by State lawmakers last year to spur economic development and job creation. The money will be used to help defray some of the costs associated with the \$25 million runway extension project east of Georgetown.

"This is fantastic news for the airport, for employers like PATS Aircraft and for the economy in Sussex County," County Council President Michael H. Vincent said after the decision. "This investment is a critical piece to the partnership puzzle of federal, State, local and private industry leaders who have spent years working together on this very important project to improve the airport and add jobs to our county."

For nearly a decade, the County has been working on a long-term goal of extending its airport's main runway to make the facility more competitive and accommodate larger aircraft, such as Boeing 737s and Boeing 757s. Boeing 737 models already fly in and out of the

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Sussex County Airport earns \$3.7 million for runway extension general aviation field for interior conversion work at manufacturer PATS Aircraft Systems; PATS has plans to service the larger Boeing 757s in the future, but because of the current runway length, the airport and company cannot currently accommodate those aircraft.

By extending the 5,000-foot-long runway another 1,000 feet, to 6,000 feet, those larger aircraft could take off with a full tank of fuel, without having to make costly and time-consuming stops at other regional airports before traveling on to their delivery destinations.

PATS Aircraft, which has been located at the airport since the 1990s, employs approximately 350 people at its hangars in Georgetown. The runway extension project would solidify the company's presence and allow it to grow its operation, as well as make the airport more marketable to other future tenants, County officials said.

The airport-industrial park complex is a vital economic development engine in Sussex County, putting approximately 900 people to work in everything from manufacturing and poultry processing to storage and distribution. It is also home to Delaware Technical & Community College's aircraft maintenance education program.

For years, Sussex County officials have worked with members of Delaware's Congressional delegation, as well as Delaware Department of Transportation officials, to come up with a funding solution to make the plan a reality. Not only would the project involve extending the runway itself, but it would require Park Avenue, known locally as Truck Route 9, to be moved to the southeast, reconnecting it with a new intersection at Arrow Safety Road.

So far, the County has spent more than \$3 million on engineering and design work, and to acquire property near the airport to accommodate the runway extension project, and in all will spend about \$7 million of the project's total cost. The County has secured commitments from the Federal Aviation Administration for 95 percent of the funding to pay for construction of a 500-foot extension of the runway. But restricted federal funds and tight budgets over the past few years have until now hampered the additional 500 feet needed for the total project.

With money now from the Infrastructure Investment Fund – contingent on federal and State transportation dollars being available for the road realignment – the County can move forward on plans for the full runway extension.

“This is exciting news for Sussex County, and we’re very thankful for our partners at the State who have recognized the value of investing in Sussex County’s future,” said County Administrator Todd F. Lawson. “This project is more than just expanding the runway and rerouting a road. It will grow businesses, open up job opportunities and transform our transportation system – in the air and on the ground – in the greater Georgetown area for years to come.”

PATS Aircraft Chief Executive Officer John Martin thanked the State for its support of the application. “We are encouraged that the State recognizes the importance of the runway extension and the jobs it will create, not only at PATS, but also within the county,” Mr. Martin said. “We view this as a win-win for the private sector, for the county and for the state.”

The New Jobs Infrastructure Fund was established by the Delaware General Assembly in 2011 to boost economic development in the state and provide seed money for job growth. State leaders set aside \$40 million in funding for businesses and governments to tap to pay for improvements to infrastructure, such as roads, utilities and airports, which would, in turn, help attract new jobs and keep growing businesses here.

PATS Aircraft submitted the application in February, with sponsorship from Sussex County government, requesting the State fund be used for the Sussex County Airport runway extension project. PATS anticipates the project would boost its business, allowing the company to add another 60 jobs to its payroll in the years to come. Officials also expect it to benefit the other 16 businesses and their 500 employees in the industrial park.

Construction of the first 500-foot runway extension is slated to begin this summer, and should be completed by late 2013. County leaders are hopeful ground will be broken on the second phase of the project, the additional 500 feet, by sometime in 2014.

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