

level of service at our airport, and they have done so. The whole idea is don't let American get to the point where they own the place."

Brantley said he believes Piedmont Triad should actively recruit carriers who can compete head-to-head with Piedmont Airlines, which despite its hub in Charlotte is still the major carrier out of Greensboro. "Today," Brantley said, "you're not going to find one carrier who would have the resources to do that. You're going to have to find a series of carriers. You've got American up there [in Greensboro], and American has a lot of service capability that is not coming here, that does not need to come here. Piedmont Triad at least has that alternative. They need to develop avenues whereby no one carrier is going to be able to say, 'I've got this market 100 percent, and you're going to do what I

want to do or you're not going to do anything.'"

Brantley suggested that Piedmont Triad attempt to lure both Northwest Airlines and Southwest Airlines to the Greensboro facility. Both, he said, need East Coast hubs. "I'd like to say to Stanley Frank that I understand why you guys went after Peoples Express but learn from that that there are a lot of folks out there who seem like a good thing at the time. But never lose sight of the fact that when you've got quality at an airport, you've got to compete with quality and more quality. You've got real good quality at Greensboro with Piedmont. Don't go putting up some second-string competitor against Piedmont because Piedmont will beat them to death. Put a first-rate competitor up against Piedmont and they'll compete."

Floyd P. McKenzie Jr., chief operating officer at Piedmont Triad International, said officials there have spoken with both Northwest and Southwest airlines about servicing the Greensboro airport. In fact, he said, a meeting was held with Southwest Airlines just two weeks ago. Nothing, however, has been decided, he said.

"We're always looking for a good airline but the possibility of our securing a major hub are probably rather slim at this point by virtue of the fact that most of the major airlines have established those hubs they're going to be operating from," Frank said of his conversations with the airlines. "But certainly we would be receptive under certain circumstances to any airline that might want to select this airport for any type of hub, a mini-hub or a major hub." □

because we didn't want to start building additions four or five years after it was opened and, in fact, we're not going to have to build on to this facility for some time."

That's not to say Frank doesn't expect the airport to grow. Only that there was room several years ago when Peoples Express decided to start service to Greensboro, and there was room later when Presidential Airlines moved in. Unfortunately for Piedmont Triad, neither operation was a success and both are now gone.

John C. Brantley, director of Raleigh-Durham International, believes, too, that there is a good deal of growth potential available for Piedmont Triad, but he says the Greensboro airport will always live in the shadow of his airport and the one at Charlotte.

Several weeks ago, Brantley spoke to a Triad civic group interested in transportation issues. He related that speech in a recent interview. "I told them that, OK, you're sitting up here today taking stock of where you are, where you've been and where you want to go and that the bottom line is that you can't have everything you would like to have. The time to have gotten that is passed, but I told them they do have a good future and that what they need to do is to develop and maintain a competitive environment. You don't want to get dominated by one airline.

"You can say that RDU is dominated by American," Brantley said. "In growth numbers it appears to be, but RDU has had a very competitive environment for a long time and pricewise we still do. We have actually worked with Piedmont [Airlines] to give them additional space to encourage them to maintain a high

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Planning to help overcome past losses

Airports look ahead

by Dennis Whittington

The Triangle only has one. So does Charlotte, Asheville, Wilmington and most other areas of North Carolina.

Only the Triad has two commercial, passenger-service airports. Cooperation, however, is not the byword of the day when it comes to air travel in the Triad.

The two airports, Piedmont Triad International and Smith Reynolds, in no way work in conjunction with one another — and their operators make little pretense of even liking one another. Neither are hubs for any major carrier. Both feel they have suffered for those lost hubs and, as a result, both are currently involved in expensive upgrades of their long-term master plans.

Smith Reynolds Airport in Winston-Salem spent nearly \$45,000 for its new master plan, just recently delivered to the Airport Commission of Forsyth County. It recommends, among other things, that the airport commission buy 45 nearby houses and one church to expand its otherwise landlocked facility.

Experts have only recently begun what is expected to be a two-year, \$250,000 update of a master plan for Piedmont Triad International.

Master plans need to be kept current by any airport that wants to receive funding from the federal government's \$6 billion aviation trust fund for construction projects. The in-depth look at facilities and needs also should help

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In 1942, the year of its completion, the Smith Reynolds terminal building in Winston-Salem was the best in the Southeast, but, according to manager Roger Morgan, the city may have become too satisfied. "Our city fathers at that time hooked their thumbs in their belts, bent back and said, 'Look what we've got here,' and proceeded to do nothing more for the airport."

Photo by Julie Knight

ports along with airlines



Photo By Julie Knight

Stanley Frank, CEO of the airport authority, is receptive to the idea of Piedmont Triad International Airport becoming a hub, but he gives it a slim chance of happening. Frank believes the airport's best chance lies with linear service, or single plane service to various destinations. "When [hub airports] hit that saturation point, linear service starts entering the picture again."

which until earlier this year had been known as the Greensboro/High Point/Winston-Salem Regional Airport, and Smith Reynolds have recently launched new marketing programs aimed at convincing travelers to use their facilities. Piedmont Triad, in a

campaign designed by Horn & Stronach of Winston-Salem, has run ads comparing the cost of flying from Greensboro to the cost of flying from Raleigh and Charlotte in hopes of disputing the assumption that it costs more to fly out of the local airport.

hub in Charlotte. CCAir, which used to be known as Sunbird Airlines until its association with Piedmont Airlines, set a new record for itself in May when it boarded 70,310 passengers, a 26 percent increase over May 1987. The company boarded 1,662 of those passengers at Smith Reynolds, a big jump from the days when a struggling Sunbird would board 100 people a month at the Winston-Salem airport.

From 1938 until 1978, the since disbanded Civil Aeronautics Board attempted to ensure that every corner of the nation had adequate air service. It dictated airline destinations, the schedules they would fly and the fares they would charge. But then came deregulation and airlines were free to set routes, fares and schedules on the basis of their own market and profit projections rather than according to government regulations. That meant some of those corners where service had been dictated, but where it was not always profitable, were dropped from schedules.

In the pursuit of expanding markets and profits, airlines flocked to the largest regional population centers — places like Atlanta, Chicago and Denver — with airports built to accommodate millions of passengers. The shift from point-to-point flying to the cost-effective "hub-and-spoke" configuration called for smaller communities to be connected to hubs by a network of radiating spokes.

Hub-to-hub traffic, such as Charlotte-to-Atlanta, is fast and frequent, but spoke cities, like Greensboro, are sometimes less accessible. Spoke travelers usually have to fly first to a hub — sometimes in the opposite direction from an intended destination — before taking off again. For example, some of Piedmont's flights from Greensboro to Richmond, Va., must first go to Charlotte where an hour-long layover is not uncommon.

Commuter airlines, such as CCAir at Smith Reynolds, generally fly propeller-powered planes built for short-haul travel and seat less than 60 passengers. Increasingly, these planes have replaced the large jets that had served some spoke communities.

Both Piedmont Triad International,

The definition of "hub" has changed in many years before. Hubs were usually federal aviation laws now based on the basis of passenger numbers. According to an airport. According to the airport, there are 29 "large" airports with 4.4 million passengers each (Piedmont Triad International falls into this category); and between 220,000 and 1 million passengers each.

Operators Council in Washington, D.C.-based airports, recently ranked the airports based on passenger volume. Piedmont Triad International is No. 71, pretty far behind both Charlotte (No. 24) and Raleigh (No. 44). Stanley Frank, chief of the Greensboro-High Point Authority, which oversees the airport's operations, says the counting procedures are such as Charlotte and other airports who are not at his airport and fly where they change planes. There are as boarding passengers.

The local airport's name is the airport authority's name. The airport authority's May 26 board resolution was passed to change the name, but that change must be approved by the N.C. General

Charlotte and Raleigh are among many more originating airports, Frank said. Passenger figures you read are based on aircraft and getting onto the aircraft and getting onto the community. They may be for breakfast but not spending any money on flights.

Charlotte/Douglas and Raleigh offer travelers direct flights to London via Piedmont and Paris via American. Despite its name, Piedmont International Airport's marketing plan is no direct flights to

Several underlying factors appear to work against any unifying action between the two airports. Some of those factors were laid out fairly well two months ago in a lengthy report issued by Leadership Greensboro. (Leadership Greensboro, sponsored by the Greensboro Area Chamber of Commerce, selects 25 business people each year to take an in-depth look at an issue of interest to the local business community. This year's report is entitled "The Economic City: Regional Cooperation in the Piedmont Triad.")

The following excerpt from that report addresses the airport situation: "A chief thorn in the side of Winston-Salem was the Greensboro High Point Airport. Both the Greensboro Airport and Smith Reynolds Airport in Winston-Salem had been served by three interstate airlines. But in 1961, the Civil Aeronautics Board held hearings in Winston-Salem on consolidating the service at one airport. Ceasar Cone led the Greensboro contingent's drive for consolidation, while Winston-Salem and Forsyth County leaders vigorously opposed the concept. The Civil Aeronautics Board approved consolidation, letting Eastern and Capital Airlines serve only Greensboro, while Piedmont Airlines continued to serve both."

Later, the report explained, there was an effort to relocate the Regional Airport to a more central Triad location in Kernersville but "the large capital investment at the Greensboro-High Point Airport argued against that." The relocation idea was killed in 1968, when the FAA approved a comprehensive, long-range master plan for the airport at its present site.

Two years ago a new fervor of regionalism was sparked when the city of Greensboro attempted to annex what was then called Regional Airport. Leaders in Winston-Salem and High Point objected, fearing the airport would lose its regional identity and Greensboro settled for annexing the area around the airport but left the airport itself as part of unincorporated Guilford County.

Piedmont Triad International's spacious, modern terminal building was opened in October 1982. "It was purposefully overbuilt," Frank said. "It was built beyond any immediate needs

Piedmont Triad International has strong feelings for them, but they seem to be a bit out of sync in their references to the facility. About the time they'll utter on the subject that Piedmont Aviation is going to move most of its operations to Charlotte/Douglas, Smith Reynolds would never be able to accommodate its needs. There are some other reasons why Piedmont chose Charlotte as its home base. He does not deny that Charlotte is essentially a central location. It originated in 1926 and equipment by R.E. Linton Miller and one of the town businessmen, R.J. Smith, was finished in 1927 for Reynolds' son, who had an avid interest in aviation and development. The foundation provided to build the airport.

Winston-Salem grew, the airport was trapped by its location. It has a one side and a 90-foot runway. It prevented the larger airport from being brought into service.

The terminal building was built in Kernersville, Morgan said. "It's a modern facility of its kind. Our city fathers at the time had their thumbs in their ears and said, 'Look what we've done and proceeded to do the airport.'"

When the Airport Commission was formed, Guilford County hired Mayes, a Charlotte-based firm, to study the airport. Morgan said that he recommends the airport be moved to the 45 residences and the Smith Reynolds to a future aircraft apron, hangars, access road and parking areas. "If this property is used for this airport will be a great aviation needs for this area," Morgan said. "The necessity for this airport is the 45 residences and the property lots associated

"There are certain perceptions that the market has about this airport that the facts and figures just don't bear out," according to Mike Horn, a partner in the advertising and marketing firm. "For example, there is a market perception by some people that it costs more to fly out of this airport compared to North Carolina's two other major airports. That's not true. So part of our marketing effort will be to put those facts and figures in front of our market so they can see them.

"Another perception we've found is the old 'you can't get there from here' thing," Horn said. "But the fact is that any place you want to go, you can get there from Piedmont Triad International Airport. A lot of it is going to be an educational process.

"A third element of the campaign," Horn continued, "will be to tell people that Piedmont Triad International Airport provides a modern facility, excellent service, great convenience and does not cost the taxpayer one penny. It is a self-sufficient entity, responsible for its own revenues."

As for those who would say 70 departures daily are not enough, Horn says it is the airlines, not the airport, who are responsible in this age of deregulation for setting schedules — as well as fares. "The airport authority is responsible for the overall growth of the airport and its facilities. We don't set the schedules or the fares. We want to develop those distinctions in this marketing campaign."

Smith Reynolds is involved in a campaign by CCAir to convince travelers that it is easier to fly from Winston-Salem than it is to drive to Greensboro.

A recent postcard mailed to Piedmont's frequent flyers pointed out that parking at Smith Reynolds is free

and that the commuter offers seven non-stops each weekday between Winston-Salem and Charlotte, and each of those flights qualifies for mileage credit in Piedmont's frequent flyer bonus program.

Smith Reynolds took an early lead in North Carolina aviation during the 1940s, but officials today contend that Winston-Salem failed to adequately support the airport and sat by idly as industrialist Ceasar Cone and other wealthy Guilford County businessmen invested their own money and convinced the government to invest some of its funds into turning what used to be a grassy Lindley Field into a state-of-the-art airport.

Today, it appears that Lindley Field's successor, Piedmont Triad International Airport, is scrambling to ensure that it does not fall to the same fate as Smith Reynolds.

As can be expected of competitors in any business, there is little love lost between the two operations. "Piedmont Triad is not an airport," Roger E. Morgan, manager of Smith Reynolds, says matter-of-factly. "It's a cow pasture over in Greensboro that's got a lot of political backing."

Morgan, who came to Winston-Salem in 1958 as an air traffic controller and who became manager of the airport in 1985 when he retired from the Federal Aviation Administration, doesn't deny that he carries some personal bitterness about the way Piedmont Triad has surpassed Smith Reynolds in terms of growth and prestige. "They bought out our mayor, our chamber of commerce, our newspaper and even our TV station. Now Piedmont Triad gets all the attention, and they'd have people believe this airport's not worth fooling with."