

**Testimony of Susan Godshall, Sr. V.P., on behalf of Anthony P. Rescigno, President,
Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce,
in support of S.B. 745
Joint Hearing: Commerce and Transportation Committees
February 17, 2009**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony urging State support for Tweed New Haven Airport. The Airport Authority is the only transportation asset in the state run by a regional board of directors. For the past ten years, airport revenue has been supported by contributions from the City of New Haven and the State, in recognition that Tweed has State-wide economic development value. The Transportation Strategy Board has recognized this role by endorsing a strategy of support for commercial air service at both Tweed and Bradley.

The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce has supported Tweed's development for over 50 years. In actions taken by the directors of at least three organizations-- the Chamber of Commerce, the Regional Growth Partnership, and the Regional Leadership Council-- Tweed is the #1 economic development priority of our region, and has been for the past decade.

The **2009 Regional Legislative Agenda**, adopted by eight partner organizations in Greater New Haven, urges the Legislature to *"strengthen interstate and regional access by increasing operating and capital support for Tweed-New Haven Airport...."*

Tweed is located in one of the most underserved air service markets in the country. Residents of Tweed's market area take over 4 million flights a year, unfortunately many of those trips from airports outside Connecticut. This results in dollars going elsewhere that could be spent in Connecticut on hospitality, restaurants and other goods and services. State support of Tweed brings traveler spending back to Connecticut businesses.

Although we recognize the unusual demands facing you in regard to the State budget this year, the Chamber strongly supports the Airport Authority's "Time Is Now" program and request for \$1.5 M in State support for airport operations. This program focuses on responsible growth in air service while addressing the burdens placed on the nearby neighborhood. The air service offered at Tweed is a component of the overall air service system in New England, designed to meet the traveling public's needs. State residents who live closer to Tweed than to any other airport benefit from having this convenient travel alternative.

At present levels, air service at Tweed adds almost \$10M/ year in economic value to the region. It saves jobs in finance, high technology, and manufacturing industries, and it brings in revenue for the hospitality and retail sector. With additional Master Plan improvements, the Federal Aviation Administration estimates that air traffic at Tweed can produce economic value of up to \$300M/year.

As Tweed continues to attract air service and implement its Master Plan, the Chamber of Commerce supports S.B. 745 to continue financial support and recognize Tweed's value to the State as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.