



City of New Bedford
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City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Group to develop Strategic Plan to guide New Bedford Regional Airport

New Bedford, Massachusetts-Mayor Jon Mitchell, and members of a Working Group he tasked with developing a Strategic Plan for New Bedford Regional Airport, gathered today to announce details of their effort Wednesday morning at the airport.

In his March State of the City Address, Mayor Mitchell called for the creation of a working group to study ways to strengthen the Airport's role as a job-creator and driver of the local economy. Equally important was the need to help local residents take advantage of changes in the commercial passenger industry so that residents will no longer be dependent on the regional air carrier hubs of Boston and Providence when they travel.

Over the past several months, several local business and civic leaders agreed to serve as part of a Strategic Plan Working Group to prepare the plan with assistance of the aviation consulting firm McFarland Johnson.

The Group, to be chaired by former Precix, Inc. CEO David Slutz, will oversee the work of the consultant in several areas, including the analysis of commercial and general aviation opportunities, market position, financial performance, and the identification of possible management/operational/infrastructure improvements.

The report will also include an action plan articulating the specific steps needed to achieve various long-term goals. The Group hopes to complete its work and finalize the consultant's recommendations in time to present a Plan to Mayor Mitchell and the Airport Commission by the end of 2018.

The effort to develop a long-term vision, and actionable strategy to achieve that vision, comes at propitious time for the Airport. Over the past several years, the Airport has increased its economic impact and job growth with sizable gains. According to a 2015 study of the Airport by

the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Aeronautics Division, in 2015, it generated \$32.4 million in local economic activity, up from \$26.3 million in 2011 – a 23% increase in four years, based on a standard economic modeling process approved by the FAA.

The MassDOT study also found that New Bedford Regional Airport supports 297 public and private jobs with an annual payroll of \$10.6 million. In 2011 the corresponding figures were 234 jobs, with an annual payroll of \$8.3 million, an increase of more than 60 new jobs in four years.

And the Airport continues to make significant progress. In 2017, New Bedford Regional Airport passed Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspection and received certification to support service to a greater range of potential destinations. The certification, known as a “139 certification,” enables carriers to fly certain aircraft with more than the nine seats currently allowed, which makes new routes commercially viable for the first time.

The new designation will allow New Bedford Regional Airport to support flights to various destinations across the United States. Of the more than 200 airports in New England, New Bedford joins just over 20 others to hold the 139 certification. New Bedford Regional Airport previously held the 139 certification but it lapsed in the 1990s.

Mayor Jon Mitchell highlighted the importance of the Group’s work: “Every successful city has to ensure that it has robust transportation connections that allow for the smooth flow of people, ideas, and goods. If New Bedford is not forming a strategy and taking necessary steps to improve its connectedness to the rest of the world, then we are jeopardizing our future success, and, as Mayor, that is not something I am willing to contemplate. The status quo is simply not an option; we can and must do better.”

The Mayor added, “When I called for the creation of a working group to develop a strategic plan for the Airport in my State of the City address, I had in mind forward-thinking private sector leaders who understand the need for a long-term game plan. I have great confidence in the volunteers who have stepped forward, and I’m grateful for their willingness to take on this task.”

Working Group Chairman David Slutz offered a similar assessment: “The global economy and the aviation industry are both evolving rapidly, and we have to make sure that key economic assets such as our Regional Airport position themselves to take advantage of those changes. A strong airport is more essential than ever – whether you’re a business traveler, vacationer, or a company that needs to efficiently transport its products or personnel to customers nationally and internationally. We have a strong foundation to build upon in New Bedford. The goal of our Group will be to provide a realistic and achievable path forward that will allow the Airport to reach its full potential.”

“Understanding what local companies need to compete in the global economy, I can tell you that it is absolutely imperative that New Bedford has a strong, successful Airport, one that puts our local businesses in the strongest possible position to compete,” said Carlos DaCunha, a working group member and member of the Airport Commission.

Working group member, former Ward 1 City Councillor, and Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board CEO, James D. Oliveira said, “As a longtime supporter and observer of the New Bedford Regional Airport, I’m convinced that a sound, long-term plan is essential to make the most of the Airport as an economic asset.”

The full list of Working Group members is as follows:

- David Slutz, Chairman – Managing Director, Potentia Holdings LLC, and former CEO, Precix
- Anne Broholm – CEO, Ahead USA
- Bill Whelan, Sr. – Principal, Whelan Associates LLC
- Carlos DaCunha – Senior Vice President, Webster Bank and Airport Commission member
- Russ Olson – Retired chiropractor and pilot
- James Oliveira – CEO, Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, former Ward 1 City Councillor
- Jamey Shachoy – Senior Managing Director, Accenture
- Paul Barton – Chairman, New Bedford Regional Airport Commission
- Richard Canastra – President, Whaling City Seafood Display Auction

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