



# Westover Airport

## Airport Business Plan: Executive Summary

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2012, Governor Deval L. Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray created the Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force (MASS Task Force), which was a call to action to begin a long-term initiative to support all military installations in Massachusetts in order to both collaborate with them and explore opportunities to bring new missions. The MASS Task Force engages with the military, industry, non-profit organizations, municipal officials, elected officials, and community members at and surrounding each installation in order to enhance, expand, add, or otherwise improve missions, programs, facilities, and operations on or affecting the military installations in the Commonwealth. Since its creation, the MASS Task Force has analyzed Massachusetts' military installations to determine where there are opportunities to fill vacant spaces, upgrade aging infrastructures, become more energy efficient, identify new missions, and build partnerships to bring more jobs and economic development at and around each site.



The MASS Task Force analysis has shown that the people and missions at each military installation in Massachusetts are supported by all of the Commonwealth's advantages. Massachusetts is first in the nation in student achievement, and at or near the top in the world in math and science. With over 300 universities within Boston's 90-mile radius, our region has a unique concentration of brainpower, which in turn creates a knowledge-based environment that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the country. Massachusetts is also first in the nation in economic competitiveness, entrepreneurial activity, health care coverage, veterans' services, and energy efficiency. Massachusetts' installations are able to take advantage of a high-quality workforce, world-class educational institutions, and advanced technological companies in our high-tech cluster.

Everything Massachusetts offers its residents, including the spirit of innovation, supports the military's presence. In short, members of the Armed Services and military families have a great Commonwealth in which to live, work, play, and be educated.

One of the six core military installations in this great Commonwealth is Westover Air Reserve Base. Westover Air Reserve Base (ARB) is a joint-use military installation that supports the mission of the C-5B Galaxy and civilian aviation activities. It is the nation's largest Air Reserve Base in terms of land mass, and supports reservists from 34 states who travel to Westover to serve in Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Reserve units. Westover ARB is strategically located in the northeast, providing close proximity to Europe and NATO alliances. For this reason, Westover ARB has figured prominently in every major contingency requiring strategic airlift. In fact, flying a C-5B from Westover to Europe and the Middle East takes 3 to 4 fewer hours than it would from Lackland AFB, where half of the aircraft at Westover will eventually be re-assigned under current military proposals. Operationally, its geographical proximity also eliminates the need for long transits to the east coast, additional crew rest, and extra fuel to fully satisfy

mission requirements. Moreover, Westover's maintenance record is stellar and its pilot and crew manning levels meet the requirements to satisfy all missions.

Westover ARB is not only important to the nation's military, but serves as a strategic interest to the Commonwealth, the Governor, and the Delegation. However, cuts to military spending and changes to military missions threaten the sustainability of the status quo at Westover ARB and, as a result, the economic vitality of the surrounding communities.

Because of the opportunities for growth and the news of upcoming cuts, in late 2013 Governor Patrick directed two primary members of the MASS Task Force, MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Aeronautics Division to study opportunities in support of economic development opportunities which would support the community and military. Therefore in early 2014 the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Aeronautics Division issued a Request for Response (RFR) for consulting services to develop an airport business plan to identify potential new/complementary military missions and to increase civilian aviation operations at the Westover ARB and the Westover Airport, respectively. The Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation (WMDC) oversees the civilian airport operations, which include scheduled/unscheduled aircraft charter operations, business aviation, and general aviation – and joined this effort. The RFR was composed in recognition of the development potential of the airfield, and also the unique qualities of the property. The contract was awarded to the McFarland Johnson Team comprised of personnel from McFarland Johnson and R.A. Wiedemann & Associates during the Spring of 2014.

The focus of the Airport Business Plan was the development of goals and objectives intended to improve the financial and mission sustainability of the Westover ARB and Westover Airport, along with the identification of specific actions to be taken in support of achieving those goals. It was envisioned that this business plan will be clear, concise, and actionable, with an emphasis on brevity to encourage stakeholders to read and enact the plan, as they channel their efforts toward building and sustaining the ARB as an economic engine and strategic resource for the Commonwealth and the Department of Defense. The Westover ARB shares a common destiny with the Commonwealth. The Project Committee hopes that all of these factors will cause the Department of Defense to think of Massachusetts when new and innovative cyber security missions, flying missions, homeland security needs, and other military priorities require a place to call home.

The Commonwealth, through the MASS Task Force, has already taken the initial steps to foster greater economic opportunities at Westover ARB, this Airport Business Plan among them.

Partnerships to date include:

- Providing energy assistance through a comprehensive energy study the state's Department of Energy Resources has launched at Westover. The goal of this study is to build on the past successes the base has previously made, and to offer the expertise of the best energy experts in Massachusetts to provide no strings attached advice on how further gains can be made at Westover to further reduce energy operating costs and enhance energy security.

- Supporting the base's master planning efforts and exploring the opportunities for shared services, the pursuit of new tenants for underutilized space, zoning, and land issues with community partners through the Air Force's Public-Private-Partnership Tabletop Exercise program.
- Expansion of UMass Amherst's Research and Development resources at Westover
- Connecting Westover staff with the state's STEM Education and Workforce Development initiatives and organizations working in the Massachusetts innovation economy.
- Domestic emergency management operations with FEMA and MEMA.

All of these partnerships to date between the MASS Task Force and Westover have followed the framework these parties agreed to in 2013 to pursue anything with the potential to reduce Air Force operating costs, enhance Air Force missions, and enhance economic development opportunities for MA and the region.

These past actions and new ideas should be seen as a commitment to the Air Force Reserve that the Commonwealth hopes to maintain an active Department of Defense presence within Massachusetts because there is tremendous value to the Air Force Reserve by locating here. The Commonwealth is in favor of additional military and commercial missions, including expansion of airport operating and tower hours at Westover. It is the Commonwealth's hope to partner with military, greater Chicopee community, and private sector stakeholders to turn these possibilities into realities. This process should be, and could be, a great story of how collaborative public/private/military partnerships strengthened the airport, the community, the Commonwealth, and the nation, simply by investing in the people and missions of Westover.

### BUSINESS PLAN PROCESS

The following is a summary of the various components and processes undertaken as part of the strategic planning effort led by the McFarland Johnson Team:

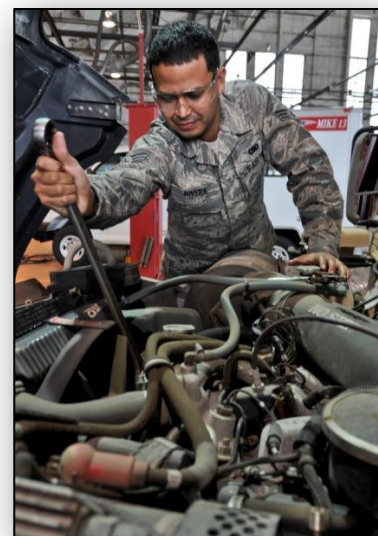
- **Research and Strategic Formulation** – With the assistance of data and reports by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, WestMass Area Development Corporation, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, demographic data specific to the Springfield Metropolitan Area was analyzed in order to produce a thorough baseline of socioeconomic information.
- **Strategic Planning Charrette** – The Project Stakeholder Committee held a strategic planning session at the onset of this process. Initial research findings and strategic ideas were presented in a formal report in order to obtain feedback and input on the development of the Airport Business Plan.
- **Assessment of Market Position and Brand Equity** – These assessments provide a quantitative and qualitative look at the Airport's competitive market position in Western Massachusetts and the relative strength of the Airport's brand among users in that market. These assessments present a basis for strengthening the Airport's competitive position and brand in tandem with identified alternatives and recommendations.

- **Identification of Airport Alternatives** – Based on feedback from the stakeholder charrette, potential airport development options were formulated and assessed according to eight criteria: Market Demand, Facilities Required, Labor Force Required, Marketing Efforts Required, Likelihood of Success, Timeframe, Value to Westover Civilian Operation, Value to Military.
- **Formulation of Financial Pro Formas** – Using historical revenues and expenses as a baseline, estimates of future financial performance were provided for each of the seven alternatives that had been selected for further consideration.
- **Dynamic Analysis Tool** – This automated planning tool was used to illustrate projections of revenue and expenses using the various alternatives considered for implementation. The tool allows web access for users to quickly analyze the financial implications of potential development scenarios at the airport.
- **Business Plan Compilation** – A draft of the final Airport Business Plan was prepared for review prior to presentation to leaders of the Commonwealth and Department of Defense.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made in this report are summarized below. Please note that each of the alternatives presented should be pursued in an opportunistic manner. However, rather than focusing on one or two at the expense of all others, an inclusive, or holistic, strategy should be embraced by pursuing multiple opportunities simultaneously. Although some alternatives presented result in stronger revenue for the airport, each alternative adds significant value to the operation and sustainability of both the civilian and military facilities. Moreover, it is possible that several of these recommendations may be interwoven with each other, implying that their individual success is dependent upon that of another. The recommendations resulting from this Airport Business Plan are as follows:

- **Attract a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) firm to Westover Airport within Three Years**
  - This alternative involves the attraction of a full-scale Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) operator to base at the airport. Services could include airframe repair, engine maintenance, major overhaul, painting, avionics, interior refurbishment, etc. MROs that work on large jets require significant runway length and large amounts of hangar space.
  - The MRO alternative is highly dependent upon the ability to accurately assess the market and hire a ‘business builder’ with close ties to the industry. Initial assessment indicates that this alternative would result in significant increases in revenue, and depending upon scale, job growth as well.



➤ **Increase the Number of Air Charter Operations and Fractional Operators**

- This alternative includes the attraction of a fractional jet ownership company, or Part 135 air charter operator, to locate at Westover Airport.
- Key to the success of this alternative is the retention of a marketing firm that has general aviation expertise and/or additional staff time at Westover. In addition, the change in operating hours for the Airport will be important in attracting more air charter and fractional jet operators.

➤ **Seek to Double the Number of Corporate Jet Operations and Add More General Aviation Based Aircraft to Westover**

- This alternative considers the attraction of general aviation and corporate/business aircraft to the Airport. Additional activity can be in the form of based aircraft or itinerant operations.
- The success of this alternative will involve the ability to fund development of hangar space at the Airport. This can be through grants, low interest loans, or private enterprise development. The attraction of new based aircraft will also depend, in part, on the retention of a marketing firm that has general aviation expertise. Similar to the fractional jet and air charter scenario, the change in operating hours for the Airport will be important in attracting more corporate aviation.

➤ **Attract an Ultra Low Cost Carrier (ULCC) to Westover within Two Years**

- This alternative focuses on reestablishing commercial passenger air service to the airport. Based upon market research and a competitive analysis, it is believed that pursuit of an Ultra Low Cost Carrier (ULCC) is the best opportunity for air service at Westover.
- The presence of a comprehensive plan and cost-friendly operating environment are crucial to attracting a ULCC. The Airport is in talks with several airlines. An airline such as Allegiant Air or Frontier could provide this type of low-cost service.

➤ **Establish Aviation/Aerospace Education Partnerships to Facilitate Research and Development Opportunities with Military and Private Sectors while Providing a Talented Workforce Pool**

- This alternative focuses on the establishment of aviation-related academic degree and/or certificate programs at the post-secondary level, in partnership with local colleges and universities, private investors, and the military. The proposed UMass Amherst/NASA Aviation Research and Training Center would be ideal for development of UAS/UAV and ATC programs; however, it is possible that a



consortium of local colleges and universities could work together with Westover on this overall educational initiative.

- The Aviation/Aerospace Education Initiative is a prudent and practical option to undertake as it relates to airport and community development. This alternative would capitalize on the Knowledge Corridor’s resources and student population, while fostering specialized workforce training that benefits public and private aviation employers and military users. Presently, \$5 million is budgeted for in the Commonwealth’s Capital Plan to support infrastructure upgrades to bring UMass Amherst to Westover.

➤ **Pursue a Consolidated Public Safety Facility on the Airport**

- As envisioned, a consolidated public safety facility is aimed at centralizing multiple types of public safety training capabilities and facilities into one co-located facility/complex at the Airport. Such a facility would include firefighting, police/MP, and other first responder training programs that serve all municipalities and providers in the Springfield area and beyond.
- Due to the complexity of this option, additional study is required to determine the full feasibility of this alternative; however, this concept appears to have support from civilian and military stakeholders.



Additional details and further information supporting the above recommendations can be found in the full Airport Business Plan.

**FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND COMMENTARY ON MILITARY MISSION OPTIONS**

Westover ARB faces challenges similar to many military installations in these times of strategic economization, yet their unique infrastructure and excess capacity provides tremendous opportunity for growth in support of military mission needs. The strong partnership between Westover Airport, Westover Air Reserve Base, and the Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force will allow all of the following recommendations to be studied in the near future.

**MILITARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that coordination with the Air Force at the appropriate level is maintained, and the following opportunities are considered as the next step in executing the Airport Business Plan as it relates to advancing joint military/civilian opportunities:

➤ **Joint Westover Plan or Joint Land Use Study:**

- The Air Force and the Airport currently perform periodic planning efforts to assess and direct future development efforts for their respective portions of the airport. A joint Westover master plan sponsored and supported equally by the Air Force and Airport, or

through the DOD's Joint Land Use Study program could be a logical and productive follow on to the Air Force Community Partnership initiative currently underway at Westover.

➤ **Preservation of Capacity:**

- The pending loss of 8 C-5Bs at Westover ARB will not result in excess facilities of any magnitude. The loss of aircraft will, however, result in a loss of some full-time enlisted and drilling reservist positions. There will be additional ramp space available for new missions in the future. Not knowing the future of Department of Defense needs and subsequent budget allowances, Westover ARB should seek to preserve current capacities for future new missions – new missions that may include a return to 16 C-5B aircraft.

➤ **Expansion of Aerial Port Capabilities:**

- Westover ARB currently maintains a small aerial port capability. A future consideration could include examination and promotion of Westover as a primary departure port for Europe (as the closest U.S. military C-5B base to Europe) while Dover would focus on the Middle East and other regions.

➤ **New Fixed or Rotary Wing Mission Potential:**

- The North Ramp at Westover maintains space that could accept a new mission for the installation. A squadron of either fixed or rotary wing aircraft could be a viable new mission for Westover with plenty of ramp space available and land available for the development of supporting facilities.

➤ **Supply Chain Space Offer:**

- Westover ARB mission aircraft work in concert with Dover AFB to load and unload their payloads primarily because the supply chain distribution network better serves the Dover area. If there were opportunities to encourage a portion of the supply chain distributors to the Westover area by virtue of offering space on Westover ARB to these suppliers; a proactive approach to reorienting/supplementing/redirecting the supply chain support decisions more toward Westover ARB, thus strengthening the geographic posture and the regional economics of Westover, may result.

➤ **New Controlled Airfield Technology – SATAS:**

- The civilian side of the Airport is exploring opportunities for 24 hour airfield operations which include one option of going to a non-towered airfield situation from the hours of 11 pm to 7 am.

The opportunities represented in the above concepts, if desired for the future, should be well documented and packaged for future use in selling the ideas to potential advocates for Westover ARB. The packaging of the ideas should include documenting the need, the possibilities and the resources that would be required to carry the ideas forward.

Additional details and further information supporting the above recommendations can be found in the full Airport Business Plan.