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In Lewiston-Auburn, development around the airport is taking off

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Despite the inconvenience of a national economy that analysts have recently highlighted as stagnant at best, the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine have seen a healthy dose of positive and progressive transportation development projects that has the community buzzing with anticipation and enthusiasm.

Located just four miles southwest of the central business district for the cities of Auburn and Lewiston, the area around the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport has become a recent hotbed for development activity. Effectively able to reach over 786,000 people or just over 59% of the state's population within an hour's drive, the airport opens up new modes of transportation with logistical benefits.

After nearly 8 months of renovation, December saw the addition of an expanded terminal building at the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport. Averaging 176 take-offs and landings per day, the airport ranks as the third busiest publicly funded airport in the state.

Providing a panoramic view of the main 5,001 foot runway, the 7,000 s/f modern terminal is designed to handle an estimated 25,000 passengers per year or three times as many as the previous building, while also handling nearly 64,500 aircraft operations annually.

The airport is surrounded by transportation resources including highway and rail modes of transportation, an intermodal transportation facility, the recently permitted second phase expansion of the Auburn Industrial Park, and a federally designated Foreign-Trade Zone.

Featuring an upgraded passenger lounge, conference room, business meeting area, pilot lounge, planning area, a renovated restaurant, new gate, and expanded office space for airport administration, a 2006 economic impact study completed by the Maine Department of Transportation titled Economic Impacts of Airports in Maine stated that the annual impact of the airport is over \$20 million to the surrounding area.

Taking advantage of the strategically placed supporting transportation assets such as the intermodal port facility, multiple warehouses, and convenient access to rail, highway and air transportation methods within the immediate area is key to attracting and growing our local businesses. Last summer, business leaders and officials from throughout Central Maine attended a free, one day seminar highlighting the 760 acre Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) #263 located in Auburn adjacent to the airport for international trade.

Designed to essentially level the global playing field, the FTZ program allows companies to defer paying duties on imported goods until they are sold domestically. If the product is exported, or shipped to another FTZ for storage or additional assembly to be exported, the tariff is deferred or eliminated altogether. An FTZ user can also warehouse raw materials or components, assemble, finish, or otherwise add value to the goods and typically expect to pay lower tariffs compared to the

tariff rate prior to alteration.

Companies that conduct manufacturing, assembly, fabrication and value-added activities within a FTZ are also eligible for additional benefits including inverted tariff savings, weekly customs entry savings, duty deferral, duty elimination on waste and scrap, duty elimination on rejected or defective parts, duty elimination on re-exports, and duty.

In October of last year, Phase II of the Auburn Industrial Park received final approval from the Army Corps of Engineers for the development of a new eight lot subdivision on approximately 100 acres of industrial land adjacent to the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport. A joint venture between the City of Auburn and Auburn Business Development Corporation (ABDC), the new subdivision is large enough to handle up to eight or more buildings and can accommodate up to 1.3 million s/f of new construction.

Awarded a \$1.7 million matching grant from the federal Economic Development Administration in April of last year for infrastructure improvements, the Auburn City Council voted to provide the necessary matching funds locally. In addition to the \$1.7 million invested by the City of Auburn to match the EDA grant, a \$3 million bond issue was passed by the City in early 2005 for the creation of the new industrial park designed to provide additional land area for commercial and industrial development that builds upon the success of the 58-acre Kittyhawk Industrial Park.

Located in an area of the city zoned strictly for industrial use, officials estimate the industrial park could capture up to \$80 million in private investment and in excess of 200 jobs over the next 10 to 15 years, while producing nearly \$1 million per year in new property taxes for the City of Auburn. Construction on Phase II of the industrial park is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2013.

On a final positive note, the Riverfront Island Master Plan in Lewiston and riverfront corridor both continue to generate excitement in the community. Recently awarded the 2012 Plan of the Year by the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Riverfront Island Master Plan aims to develop a vision for the Riverfront Island and downtown area in respect to future economic and community development projects.

As it turns out, many businesses and cultural events are looking to capitalize on future downtown growth opportunities in advance of the major investment by relocating back into the downtown.

In late December, city officials welcomed the expansion and relocation of Rainbow Bicycle into the downtown on Lisbon St. Encompassing nearly 5,600 s/f, the new space is large enough to accommodate an extensive inventory of bicycle related products as well as a new bistro called the Local Grind Café. Featuring free wireless internet for customers, the space is designed to be comfortable and inviting while featuring ample room for those looking to relax for an extended period of time.

Actively involved in promoting all aspects of cycling from local bike rodeos and charity rides to professional level racing events, Rainbow Bicycle coordinates mechanical support for the Dempsey Challenge, the Trek Across Maine, and Optimist Club Bike Rodeo. Founders of the Maine Cycling Club, Lake Auburn Road Race and many other cycling events in the Central Maine area, they also serve as the primary organizer for Downeast Cyclocross Weekend.

As our popular slogan around town says, in "L/A, it really is happening here!"

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