

# Okaloosa County News Release



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Airport Director Greg Donovan, 651-7160

## Airport Director to Speak at Industry Conference

Greg Donovan, Okaloosa County's airports director will be a featured speaker on Tuesday, November 6, at the 34<sup>th</sup> annual Airport Consultants Council (ACC) conference in Bonita Springs, Florida. Joining Donovan for the session will be the director of Fort Lauderdale International Airport, the chairman of Airports Council International and director of the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, the former CEO of Massport, and a finance executive from Citibank to discuss the future of a proposed national aviation policy on funding airports. The conference theme is building a post recession flight plan for aviation leaders.

"Last summer, we bottomed out as an industry when short-term (funding) extensions lagged for two weeks, as many functions of the FAA and Airport Improvement Program (AIP) temporarily shut down," stated Donovan. "Fortunately, we now have a multi-year authorization for use of the aviation trust fund so that should not happen again but the long term question of how airports can continue to be financially self-sustaining needs to be discussed. I am grateful to be a part of the dialogue."

Most of the nation's 429 commercial service airports impose a \$4.50 Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) on each airline ticket sold in addition to fees collected on airline tickets to finance the nation's aviation trust fund. Industry associations and policy makers are debating whether to allow airports the option to raise the PFC and if so, would a cap be appropriate. Some of the nation's largest airports with the highest passenger volume favor increasing PFCs while smaller facilities are concerned with lesser allocations from the trust fund.

"I absolutely agree that the industry needs to be strategic in our thinking and work towards a National Aviation Policy so airports, regardless of size, can finance capital improvements for years ahead without needing to depend on local taxes" stated Donovan. "In Okaloosa County, we are fortunate that all projects are achieved by competing well for grants from the aviation trust fund and aviation specific FDOT grants. The required local match comes entirely from fees generated by airport activity. Not a penny from the general taxpayer is used in our airport system yet the positive economic impact on our community is over \$509 million annually and over 4,500 people have jobs because of our local airports" said Donovan.

The ACC conference runs from November 5, 2012 to November 7, 2012. For more information visit <http://www.acconline.org/>.