

# SHORT FINAL

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport  
Issue Twenty Two / Summer 2015

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## From the Managers Desk



As I begin to write my remarks for the summer newsletter, I cannot help but get distracted by the sights out of my office window. At any time I can look up and view the beautiful French Rapids hills to the north, and today no less than six corporate jets, a dozen private aircraft and three helicopters cruised by my office window during my “between meetings” time at my desk. In my opinion this is the best view of any office in the region.

This view and the busy aircraft activity remind me of what a tremendous facility we have and what a great position we are in to foster growth that can benefit our community and region. In the short twenty-nine months since I came into my position I have had the opportunity to witness growth at our Airport in a variety of ways. The always critical measure of Delta passenger numbers has increased well, from a low point of about 27,000 total passengers per year in 2012-13 to an expected 35,000 passengers projected for 2015. While this is the most visible sign of Airport health, growth has been shown in other ways as well.

At Airmotive Enterprises, flight instructor Matt Van Cura is now working with more active flight students than we’ve seen in many years and the company now has four new multi-engine and jet business aircraft under management. The company is selling new airplanes again, and has moved four of the impressive Quest Kodiaks since becoming a dealer in June of 2014. And the Airmotive maintenance shop, which had one dedicated airframe and powerplant technician when I started in early 2013, now has three technicians and a new director of maintenance. In all, Airmotive alone has created a half dozen jobs in the past twenty four months, and as we move forward these and other changes at our Airport should put us in a great position to build more activity in the future.

Key among these changes, of course, is the City of Brainerd’s municipal utilities connection project. As many know, planning for the new sewer and water line from Lum Park to the Airport is now moving forward at a rapid pace, and an expected completion date at the end of 2016 looks well within reach. I am truly amazed at the partnership that enabled this project to come together, and I extend my personal thanks to the cities of Brainerd and Baxter as well as our local legislators for their unique collaboration. Having sewer and water connections close at hand will give us a critical tool to attract the businesses and job growth our community and Airport need.

And to help plan for future Airport growth, we are undertaking a significant Master Planning process that kicks off in July and will continue into 2016. While the Master Plan is an FAA-mandated process, we want to use this plan as a tool to help develop the vision and infrastructure needed to support increasing aircraft activity and aviation-related commercial development on the field. Elements reviewed in the Master Plan will include setting aside specific pieces of Airport property for development, laying out spaces for future hangar construction, and even exploring whether we can add an official seaplane base. A Master Plan Advisory Committee is being formed over the next few weeks that will provide input from a variety of constituencies into the planning process, and there will be individual meetings with critical stakeholders as well as opportunities for public input as the process unfolds. We intend to make this Master Plan a blueprint for a thriving future.

As always, I want to thank all who have supported your Airport. Our small Airport staff as well as the seventy-plus other employees who work on the field every week are appreciative of the investment you have made, and we plan to continue providing great return on that investment. Have a great summer!

Jeff Wig

Manager - Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport

## Unusual Visitor to Brainerd

A drizzly spring day in May brought a well known visitor to Brainerd. Sierra Sue II, a North American P-51D



stopped by to visit Terry Stern, Brainerd T-6 warbird owner.

Sierra Sue II is familiar to many Minnesota warbird fans, having been flown for some 30 years by Dr. Roger Christgau of Austin Minnesota. Sold to

Mr. Paul Ehlen the airplane has recently undergone a complete multi year restoration at Air Corps Aviation in Bemidji. Mr. Ehlen will be flying the aircraft at various airshows throughout Minnesota and the Midwest. Look for this beautifully restored aircraft this summer at an airshow near you. ☺

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**Upcoming Events**

June 27, 2015	Kinship Kids Flights 8:00 AM
July 16, 2015	Airport Commission 9:30 a.m.
August 19, 2015	Airport Commission 9:30 a.m.
September 17, 2015	Airport Commission 9:30 a.m.

*Normally scheduled airport Commission meetings will be the third Thursday of each month. Please note schedule change for Wednesday August 19th.*

**Welcome Brandon**

Brandon Baker is the new summer intern at the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport. A senior at Mankato State University in Mankato, hailing from White Bear Lake Minnesota, Brandon will be graduating at the end of the summer with a degree in aviation management. A certificated private pilot with a float plane rating, he fits in very well with the pilot population here at the airport and speaks pilot!



The intern position at our airport is not just one of slave labor, but

a true learning experience. Among the projects that Mr. Wig has tasked him with is surveying passengers on outbound flights. While he surveys many passengers he also arrives at the airport one day a week at 4:30 AM to survey the passengers on the early morning departure. A very perceptive young man, Brandon has noticed that the passengers on the early morning flight are not necessarily the most communicative and willing participants. He says that the afternoon flights are much easier! Another important project involving Brandon is the development of Minimum Operating Standards for airport business operations. These standards set forth the expectations of the airport for businesses on the field. While Brainerd does not currently have such a document, it is a very common practice in the industry. Working with Mr. Wig and aviation law attorneys, Brandon will be deeply involved in the development of these standards.

Initially entering MSU to begin his aviation education, his plan was to become a professional pilot. During the educational process, he diversified into a secondary interest of aviation management. Whether he will be full time in the cockpit, running an airport or FBO, he felt that the management degree would be to his benefit. His internship at Brainerd will help to define his career direction in the future. No matter what direction he chooses, he is enjoying his time at Brainerd and is sure to benefit from his time here.

Brandon will only be here until the end of the summer, so make sure to stop in and meet him in the office next to the conference room! ☺

**Underwing Camping Explored at Airport**

The growing trend of camping with your airplane is being explored by airport management and local pilot Dave Wessels to determine if our airport could become one of these fly-in camping destinations.



A site has been selected based on accessibility, safety and proximity to services such as fuel and food. The site selection is near the tanker base, nestled in the tall pines. From there aircraft and

people can access the FBO and terminal without crossing any active runway. At a recent tenant meeting the subject was discussed and found unanimous positive support from the airport tenants. The airport commission has approved the idea in concept and research has begun on what surface changes may be needed to make the site hospitable to the activity. After that has been established, budget costs will be reviewed and a decision will be made as to the overall feasibility. If approved, this airport feature will be marketed in airport directories, fly in friendly websites and through pilot organizations.

Underwing camping is being offered by more and more airports in an effort to attract more aircraft, pilots and families to visit and enjoy the amenities the area might offer.

Don Abbott, founder of the American Air Campers Association says of the pursuit: "It puts us in touch with the magnificent beauty of the country, while bringing families closer together. Air camping provides a great, new alternative to traditional vacations. Coupling the experience of camping with the freedom of flying makes distant and hard-to-reach campsites more accessible and multiple-location trips can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time."

While many think that all aircraft owners are wealthy and can afford hotels, the majority of small aircraft owners are on a budget and aviation uses most of their recreational income. Camping with your airplane is a great way to combine love of flying with love of outdoors and do so on a budget!

Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport is ideally suited to make this offering to people who want to fly in and enjoy our beautiful Brainerd Lakes area.

Stay tuned for further updates on this exciting addition. ☺

