

# Florida Flyer

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## Bob Sikes Airport



Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport

*Governor Rick Scott visits Bob Sikes Airport.*

**Bob Sikes Airport (CEW)** is a haven for defense and industrial aerospace development as well as modification and conversion companies. With nearly 1,100 acres and a runway measuring 8,000 feet and equipped with an instrument landing system, the airport accommodates more than 67,000 aircraft operations annually ranging from small general aviation aircraft to the world's largest transports.

Bob Sikes Airport serves Okaloosa County and provides general aviation services for corporate aviation, air taxi service, and military operations to nearby Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, 7th Special Forces, and Duke Field.

*This special edition of the Florida Flyer focuses on Bob Sikes Airport and its recent growth and economic development.*

# Bob Sikes Airport Serves the Community

**B**ob Sikes Airport is located in the heart of Okaloosa County, just three miles northeast of Crestview in northwest Florida. A popular vacation destination, Okaloosa County is the home of Florida's Emerald Coast with 24 miles of white, sandy beaches along the Gulf of Mexico. The area is known for world-class fishing, boating, diving, and other water sports, as well as golfing and shopping.

**Bob Sikes Airport is a self-sufficient public-use general aviation facility** owned and operated by Okaloosa County. The airport is part of the Okaloosa County Airports System which

also includes Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) and Destin Executive Airport (DTS).

**Tracy Stage, A.A.E., Airports Director for Okaloosa County, and Deputy Director Mike Stenson provide leadership and management** for all three of the county's public-use airports, including Bob Sikes Airport.

Bob Sikes Airport was established in 1964 and was named after U.S. Congressman Robert Sikes. As a Congressman for northwest Florida from 1940 to 1978, Sikes helped make northwest Florida a military stronghold, and he helped preserve its beaches.

The mission of the Okaloosa County Airports Department is to provide "safe, dependable air transportation support services in accordance with the highest standards through facilities that ensure comfort and convenience for business, military and leisure travelers." **The county's Airports Department wants to serve the local aviation needs of the region while better positioning local businesses to prosper.**

To learn more about Bob Sikes Airport, see [www.flycew.com](http://www.flycew.com) or call the airport at (850) 651-7160. ♦



*Aerial view of Bob Sikes Airport.*

Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport



Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport

*BAE Systems hangar at Bob Sikes Airport.*

## Important Industrial Base for Okaloosa County

Okaloosa County has an abundance of high-tech employment, much of it focused around aviation, aerospace, and engineering businesses. Bob Sikes Airport serves as the region's industrial base with several major on-airport tenants and businesses. Some of the highlights of the airport's economic impact on the community include:

- **Bob Sikes Airport is financially self-sufficient** and completely reliant on airport-generated revenue; no ad valorem or general sales taxes are used to maintain, operate, or develop the airport.
- **The airport accommodates some of the largest employers in Okaloosa County.** L-3 Communications, for example, is one of the area's largest non-government employers with more than 1,000 employees working at its airport location.
- **Bob Sikes Airport offers an ideal location for businesses in the defense and aerospace industries** because of its proximity to Eglin Air Force Base, Duke Field, and Hurlburt Field. The airport already provides a home to several aerospace manufacturing and modification companies, including Segers Aerospace Corporation, L-3 Crestview Aerospace, and Sunshine Aero Industries.
- Several flight testing and non-aviation related companies are located in **two industrial parks adjoining airport property.** Approximately 170 acres, including many prime sites and large parcels, are available for development within airport boundaries. Nearly 110 acres are available for business development in adjacent airparks.
- **Crestview has rail and interstate (I-10) connections,** allowing businesses located at the airport to have several options for receiving supplies and shipping their products. Interstate 10, U.S. Highway 90, State Highway 85, and State Road 188 are minutes away from the airport.
- **The Port of Pensacola and the Port of Panama City,** both designated foreign trade zones, provide direct access to the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Bob Sikes Airport and Okaloosa County Industrial Airpark are located in a designated Enterprise Zone.** Businesses located within zone boundaries receive tax advantages and financial incentives for private investment and employment growth. ♦

### Economic Impact

The total annual economic impact of Bob Sikes Airport follows:

- **Total employment: 2,791**
- **Direct impacts: \$174,324,000** (from the tenants/businesses at the airport and construction projects undertaken by the airport or by on-site businesses)
- **Indirect impacts: \$1,853,000** (associated with spending from visitors who arrive in the area by way of general aviation aircraft)
- **Multiplier impacts: \$117,516,000**
- **Total payroll: \$108,208,000**
- **Total output: \$293,693,000**

*—from the Florida Statewide Aviation Economic Impact Study Update, August 2014*

# Bob Sikes Airport's Tenants and Businesses

## Emerald Coast Aviation, FBO [www.emeraldcoastaviation.com](http://www.emeraldcoastaviation.com)

Emerald Coast Aviation, a full-service privately operated FBO, has contributed to recent growth at the airport. The FBO's trained and dedicated team of professionals support the general, corporate, and military aviation industries offering services such as aircraft maintenance, flight training and instruction, aircraft rental, and full-service Jet A and 100LL fuel at competitive prices.

After being selected as the FBO at Bob Sikes Airport in 2008, Emerald Coast Aviation made several important changes including investing in a new fuel farm in 2009 and building a new terminal in 2015. The FBO strives to offer first-class customer service, making fresh-baked cookies, hot coffee and snacks, a pilot snooze room, and flight planning area available to all guests. The FBO operates 365 days a year from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Emerald Coast Aviation offers an FAA 145 repair station facility, and is in the process of adding an FAA 135 on-demand charter certificate and an FAA Part 141 flight school.



## L-3 Crestview Aerospace [www.l-3crestview.com](http://www.l-3crestview.com)

L-3 Crestview Aerospace (L-3 CA), a division of L-3 Aerospace Systems, is one of the region's largest non-government employers. Approximately 1,000 employees work at the airport complex daily including highly skilled A&P licensed aircraft mechanics, electricians, and the logistic and management personnel necessary for aerospace manufacturing and support.

The company's primary products and services include aircraft assembly, aircraft modification, aerostructures fabrication, and an FAA Part 145 repair station.



Photographs by Tom Rimkus, Emerald Coast Aviation

Photographs: Emerald Coast Aviation, a full-service privately operated FBO (top); an L-39 Albatros being pushed into an Emerald Coast Aviation hangar for overnight storage (center); an Air Methods air ambulance that is currently based at the airport (above).

**Sunshine Aero Industries**

[www.sunshineaero.com](http://www.sunshineaero.com)

Sunshine Aero Industries (SAI) Flight Test is a privately owned small business located in the Crestview Technology Airpark at Bob Sikes Airport. Established in 1980, SAI has provided its customers with more than thirty years of accident-free flight test and flight test support. SAI is dedicated to providing highly capable support for the development of advanced aircraft and aircraft systems.

SAI's new 31,000-square-foot facility includes 20,000 square feet of hangar space for engineering, fabrication, aircraft modification, maintenance, an FAA certified repair station, and office space. Private access to the airport's 8,000-foot hard surface ILS equipped runway can support nearly every private, commercial, or military aircraft. From its Crestview base, SAI has supported test operations at every national test range.



Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport

**Qwest Air Parts**

[www.qwestairparts.com](http://www.qwestairparts.com)

Qwest Air Parts relocated their dismantlement facility and parts distribution center from Memphis, Tennessee to Bob Sikes Airport in 2011. Qwest Air Parts specializes in the disassembly of large commercial aircraft and provides recovered aircraft components to clients throughout the world. The company supplies to major airlines and is one of the largest global parts suppliers.

Qwest Air Parts moved into a new 20,000 square-foot aircraft hangar at Bob Sikes in December 2011. The hangar, along with associated parking, aircraft apron, and utilities, serves as their base for aircraft parts recovery and demolition. Qwest Air Parts is also building a large parts distribution center that is expected to generate more than 100 local jobs.

**Air Methods Corporation**

[www.airmethods.com](http://www.airmethods.com)

Air Methods Corporation is the largest publicly owned emergency medical services helicopter operator in the United States. In 2011, Air Methods chose Bob Sikes Airport as its operational base for rotorcraft maintenance and service.

Air Methods offers medical transport aircraft across the U.S. with a fleet of more than 400 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. Established in 1980, the company has built its reputation on a commitment to quality patient care and safety in aviation operations.

Based in Englewood, Colorado, Air Methods serves 48 states with more than 300 bases of operations, including their base at Bob Sikes Airport. ♦



Courtesy of Sunshine Aero Industries



Photograph by Tom Rimkus, Emerald Coast Aviation

*Photographs, clockwise from above: Sunshine Aero Industries Flight Test; a 1940s era North American T-6; and assembly work on a helicopter at L-3 Crestview Aerospace.*

# Airport Facilities

**B**ob Sikes Airport has one runway, 17/35. Equipped with an instrument landing system, the runway is 8,005 feet long by 150 feet wide. The airport can accommodate large military transport aircraft such as the U.S. Air Force Boeing C-17 which is used to deliver helicopters to Crestview Aerospace Corporation. The airport also has the capability of landing the DC9, 727, 737, 757, and 767.

The runway's asphalt pavement was rehabilitated in 2008–2009, and it remains in excellent condition. The pavement surface for the entire runway/taxiway system is less than eight years old, and most of the aprons have been rehabilitated in recent years. By 2017, all paved surfaces will be new.

The airport's fixed base operator, Emerald Coast Aviation, is a privately operated maintenance shop offering aircraft repairs and servicing. An on-site aircraft rescue and firefighting facility provides emergency services for the airport with a new 18,000 square-foot fire station. ♦



Courtesy of Sunshine Aero Industries

*Photographs, clockwise from top: Sunshine Aero Industries hangar; front entrance of the new FBO terminal; a worker at L-3 Crestview Aerospace; cabin panels for Boeing's CH-47 Chinook at L-3 Crestview Aerospace.*



Photograph by Tom Rimkus, Emerald Coast Aviation



Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport



Courtesy of Bob Sikes Airport

# Projects and Improvements

## Bob Sikes Airport Attracts Businesses and Investment

Over the past several years, the airport has spent more than \$70 million on new infrastructure, all provided by state and federal grants.

A new road, currently under design, will soon link Bob Sikes Airport and industrial parks to U.S. Highway 90. Construction should begin by the summer of 2017. The new Foy Shaw Industrial Parkway will provide easy access to I-10 and the CSX Railroad line. In order to safely accommodate an increase in traffic, this project includes improving existing unpaved roads that will receive traffic from the new roadway. Currently, most vehicles travel through residential areas to reach the airport. The new road will be more suitable for industrial traffic, and it will make the airport more accessible for all vehicles. The airport plans to build a new entrance from U.S. 90 with significant aesthetic enhancements.

In recent years, the airport has built hangars, added utilities and ramp extensions on the southwest side, increased fence height, made gate improvements, constructed a new aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) facility, and improved visibility by clearing trees from both ends of the runway. The airport also widened and realigned parallel Taxiway A, created a centralized storm-water management system, completed a pavement rehabilitation project, and improved signage and markings. ♦



Photograph by Mike Padilla, Okaloosa County Airports

*Airport entrance sign.*



Photograph by Florida Aerial Services, Inc.

*Bob Sikes Airport widened and realigned parallel Taxiway A.*

# Innovation at Bob Sikes Airport

Okaloosa County began its north apron rehabilitation project in 2011, recognizing this project as an opportunity to apply recent research “in asphalt technology to improve pavements on behalf of airports and the asphalt industry.” This project was the first to make use of a new fuel-resistant asphalt specification identified as P-401-FR, also known as “Crestview Mix,” developed by AVCON, INC., and asphalt specialist Dr. Robert Boyer, P.E.

Because the project was funded by the state of Florida, airport representatives and engineers from AVCON, INC., met with officials from the Florida Department of Transportation and the Governor’s Office to obtain approval for the new specification. “Their support gave us a unique opportunity to develop a new pavement design that will extend the pavement life and will set the standard for asphalt pavement construction on airport aprons,” said Tracy Stage, A.A.E., Airports Director for Okaloosa County.

The new asphalt uses a highly polymer-modified asphalt binder along with low air voids. The asphalt has high stability and low permeability, and it is non-toxic. It provides improved resistance to rutting and shoving, and it also resists aircraft fuels, hydraulic fluids, and petroleum oils.

The asphalt specification, P-401-FR, is now being reviewed; it is anticipated that it will become a federal specification for military use and an FAA-approved specification.

To read more about the asphalt innovation at Bob Sikes Airport, see the July-August 2012 edition of *Airport Improvement Magazine* online at [www.airportimprovement.com](http://www.airportimprovement.com). ♦



Courtesy of Sunshine Aero Industries

Sunshine Aero Industries aircraft.

**Florida Flyer**  
Florida Department of Transportation  
605 Suwannee Street, MS-46  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Recycled paper



Printed on

The *Florida Flyer* is a non-profit newsletter published quarterly by the Aviation and Spaceports Office of the Florida Department of Transportation. To subscribe to the *Florida Flyer*, contact Fred Karuga, Editor, FDOT Aviation and Spaceports Office, 605 Suwannee Street, MS-46, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450, phone (850) 414-4512, fax (850) 414-4508, email [Fred.Karuga@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:Fred.Karuga@dot.state.fl.us). Visit our website at [www.dot.state.fl.us/aviation](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/aviation).

