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South Carolina Aeronautics Commission Aviation Newsletter

NO. 12

DECEMBER 1975

VOL. 25 -1

FAA FORECASTS AVIATION GROWTH

After dropping slightly in FY 75 because of higher operating costs and a sluggish economy, air line passenger traffic is expected to increase by seven percent during the current fiscal year and then at 5.8 percent annual rate through 1982, the Federal Aviation Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation said today in releasing its latest "Aviation Forecasts."

A similar growth pattern is projected for the general (non-airline) segment with the number of flight hours increasing at an annual rate of five percent over the same time period, following a four percent gain in FY 1976.

According to the FAA report, the number of passengers carried by the scheduled U.S. airlines should increase from 201.9 million to 301.1 million in the FY 1975-1982 time period. Domestic passenger traffic should show the largest gains, rising steadily from 184.9 million to 286.6 million over the same period. International traffic, which has been declining since FY 1973, should level off this year at 17 million enplanements and then grow steadily to 23.5 million in FY 1982.

Revenue passenger miles logged by U.S. airlines are expected to increase at a 6.3 percent annual rate, rising from 159 billion in FY 1975 to 251.5 billion in FY 1982. Again, domestic revenue passenger miles will set the pace, going from 127.7 billion to 205 billion while international revenue passenger miles rise from 31.3 billion to 46.5 billion during the time period.

The size of the active general aviation fleet is expected to increase at annual rate of 3.3 percent during the forecast period, going from 161,500 in FY 1975 to 202,000 in FY 1982. The largest percentage gain will be in the multi-engine and turbine classes, point-

ing up the increasing sophistication of the general aviation segment.

While the general aviation fleet is rising 3.3 percent annually, the number of flight hours logged by these operators is expected to jump five percent a year on the average, reflecting a greater utilization of each aircraft. From the FY 1975 level of 32.2 million, flight hours are projected to rise to 45.3 million in FY 1982.

For U.S. aircraft serving the domestic market, the forecasts show increases in passenger traffic ranging from a low of 357.2 million to a high of 402.7 million by FY 1987. Revenue passenger miles for the domestic market, meanwhile, would have a spread of 206.4 billion to 296.8 billion. No long-range forecasts are included for U.S. carriers serving the international market.

The long-range projections for general aviation, indicate that the number of aircraft will increase to somewhere between 238,000 and 274,000 by FY 1987. Hours flown will rise to a range of 55.9 million to 64.7 million by the same date.

The impact of these growth trends on FAA's air traffic facilities will be substantial, the report notes. Operations at airports with FAA control towers are forecast to increase by 41 percent by FY 1980 and double the present level by FY 1987. General aviation will be responsible for most of this growth, accounting for 79 percent of all operations by FY 1980 and 82 percent by FY 1987.

Copies of this report are available to the public through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va. 22151.