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## **Airport city promises new jobs for region**

**Byline: Douglas M. Steenland**

'Five years ago, a new era of airline travel was launched in southeastern Michigan with the opening of the Edward H. McNamara Terminal/Northwest WorldGateway at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. This investment has paid off not only in customer service and passenger amenities, but also in jobs and the local economy. The terminal facility has added gate positions and increased international service.

It is now the perfect time to take that investment one step further and turn the area around Metro Airport into an "aerotropolis," an airport city with a cluster of development that links people, freight, transportation, business and entertainment.

Some experts refer to it as the new business district of the global marketplace. I see it as a means to transform the regional economy and turn Metro Detroit into a global logistics hub.

Amsterdam's experience

The aerotropolis concept is one of six key strategies in the Road to Renaissance initiative. Local business and government leaders recently saw an airport city in action at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, operating as a shopping, dining and entertaining center that attracts passengers and people living in the surrounding communities.

Across from the main terminal, there are world-class conference facilities and the regional headquarters for firms like Thompson-CFS and Unilever. Two five-star hotels are attached to the complex, and numerous other business, financial and consulting firms are close by. Nearly 60,000 people are employed on the airport grounds. Schiphol Airport serves as Northwest/KLM's European hub airport.

Metro Airport also could make this concept a reality. J.D. Power recently announced that it ranked second in the country in overall customer satisfaction. I'm especially proud of this award since it recognizes Metro's ease of access, security and beautiful terminal facilities.

Aerotropolis makes sense

Why are airports such an attractive location? In the global marketplace, it is becoming increasingly important to move goods, services and people efficiently.

An "aerotropolis" provides a network of integrated services that allows manufacturers and other businesses to minimize their inventories and shorten production cycle times.

More and more business travelers are flying across oceans to obtain new markets, and they need airports that offer greater choices in flights and destinations. In fact, high-tech professionals travel 60 percent more frequently than other professionals do, and they are seeking regions that combine travel, business and leisure. As a major hub for Northwest Airlines and with Willow Run airport close by, Detroit and southeastern Michigan are primed to become a global logistics headquarters.

Last week, Wayne County Executive Bob Ficano, Detroit Renaissance and other government and business leaders announced the formation of a task force to develop an integrated business and marketing plan for the aerotropolis initiative. They will study the infrastructure needs of the area to attract business and industry. Due in part to the wise use of airport fees for airport-related projects, Detroit Metropolitan Airport has already been transformed into one the region's shining jewels for business travelers.

It is now time to take the next logical step in that transformation by creating an airport city that generates jobs and business opportunities for the future.

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**Caption:** Northwest Airlines supports building an airport city around Detroit Metropolitan Airport just as Amsterdam has done with its Schiphol Airport, which serves as Northwest's European hub.