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Hartsfield-Jackson impact: \$32.6 billion

Atlanta Business Chronicle

Being home to the world's busiest airport has always had its perks, but the benefits just keep getting better for metro Atlanta and Georgia, according to a new study on **Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport's** economic impact.

Direct business revenue generated in metro Atlanta by the airport spiked some 40 percent -- from \$23.5 billion in 2005 to \$32.6 billion in 2009, a study published Tuesday by the Boston-based **Economic Development Research Group** and **CH2M Hill** shows. Every four years or so, Hartsfield-Jackson undertakes an economic impact study.

On-Airport jobs increased slightly to about 58,000, up from 56,500 in 2005.

Broken down by county:

- South Fulton -- 8,971 jobs
- Clayton -- 5,726
- DeKalb -- 5,543
- Henry -- 5,262
- Fayette -- 4,730
- Cobb -- 4,464
- Coweta -- 4,274
- North Fulton -- 3,500
- Gwinnett -- 1,982
- Douglas -- 1,342
- Cherokee -- 661
- Other Ga. counties -- 1,473
- Other U.S. counties -- 6,656

Robert Kennedy, the interim aviation general manager, said in 2000, the airport's direct employment was about 44,000. That was before the 9/11 disaster, which put the aviation industry in a tailspin.

"We have probably seen some of the darkest days (in the aviation industry)," Kennedy said at the press conference. "Over the last 25 years, as we've had downturns in the industry, Atlanta does not dive as deep as other airports."

One of the reasons, Kennedy said, is that Hartsfield-Jackson continues to have some of the lowest landing fees in the nation, which makes it an attractive hub for airlines.

On-airport jobs also generated \$4.26 billion in wages and salaries in 2009.

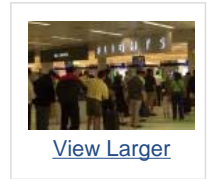
Governmental entities also benefited from taxes at the airport in 2009, pulling in a total of \$3 billion. Of the total, Georgia netted \$664 million, state counties received \$473 million and state municipalities got \$531 million.

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

Still, the airport is in a state of flux. Ben DeCosta, who served as general manager for more than a decade, retired about two weeks ago.

When asked about the status of the search for a new general manager, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed said: "I really don't know, which is probably a good thing."

He will meet with Carol Tomé, CFO of **The Home Depot Inc.** (NYSE: HD) who is chairing the search, and her committee in the next 15 days.



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"I'm pushing very hard to get this done sooner rather than later," Reed said. "Carol asked for 60 days, and I asked for 30."

But Reed acknowledged that 30 days was probably too optimistic. Asked if there would be a new general manager by September or October, Reed said: "No question about it."

Reed also added that in the meantime "I have a very high comfort level with Robert (the interim commissioner). I have a strong desire to get this done so people can stop asking me about it."

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