OPPORTUNITY *Ohio*

Airport Data Indicates Ohio's Economy Won't be Flying Anytime Soon

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There are several indicators we frequently use to measure the health of Ohio's economy – namely job growth, labor force participation, and employment. However, other factors also give us a glimpse into how Ohio is performing relative to other states. One such indicator is airport passenger data, specifically how many people are traveling out of the state by plane. Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, Ohio is a laggard relative to other states in the amount that its citizens travel by air – whether for business or for pleasure.

Though Ohio is the seventh largest state in terms of population, Ohio only ranked 21st among the states for air travel in 2012. Ohio has maintained fairly consistent in the rankings from 1990 to 2012. However, in spite of rankings, Ohio had over 926,000 fewer passengers in 2012 than it did in 2000, a drop of 8.8 percent. In terms of raw numbers, only Missouri, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Hawaii, and Tennessee lost more passengers during this time. Overall from 2000 to 2012, the number of passengers in the United States increased by almost 45 million, a 7.5 percent jump.[1]

While Ohio did add about 2 million passengers from 1990 to 2012, the state's growth rate ranked 9th worst in the country. Similarly, from 2000 to 2012, Ohio's growth (or lack thereof) in air traffic was 8th worst. However, from 2010 to 2012, Ohio improved to 32nd best.[2]

In 2012, Cleveland was Ohio's busiest airport and ranked 41st among all airports in the country. Columbus was ranked 51st, and Cincinnati was ranked 52st. Interestingly, in 2000, Cincinnati's air traffic was 20th highest in the United States, while Cleveland and Columbus ranked 34th and 52nd, respectively.[3]

From 2000 to 2012, with the exception of Tennessee, the ten states that experienced the largest decline in passengers were all forced unionization states. Meanwhile, in raw numbers, six of the ten states that added the most passengers have right-to-work laws – the four exceptions being New York, California, Washington, and Colorado. The Atlanta airport, located in right-to-work Georgia, has had the largest amount of passenger traffic since 1995, when it surpassed Chicago O'Hare.[4]

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[1] Research and Innovative Technology Administration Bureau of Transportation Statistics, "All Carriers: T-100 Domestic Market (All Carriers)," at *http://www.transtats.bts.gov/DL_SelectFields.asp?Table_ID=310* (November 24, 2013).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

It is not a coincidence that airport passenger traffic is increasing in states and cities that are economically doing well. Atlanta is booming. In North Dakota, the number of passengers increased 105 percent between 2000 and 2012. During this time period, in North Dakota, the number of private sector jobs grew 41 percent – the highest in the country.[5]

On the other hand, some states and cities do well economically because they build the infrastructure to keep up with growing demands and to entice businesses that need access to major airports. For example, near the end of 2011, Chiquita Brands International, Inc., the giant banana producer, announced that it would move its headquarters from Cincinnati to Charlotte, North Carolina. The company's main reason for making the decision was the fact that the Charlotte airport has many non-stop flights both domestically and internationally, unlike Cincinnati.[6] NCR stated the same reason related to the Dayton Airport for its move to Atlanta.

The decline of the Cincinnati airport was detrimental to Chiquita's business since the company relies heavily upon the airport for travel to Europe and South America. In 2005, Cincinnati had over 600 daily departures with 130 destinations. With the reduction in flights by Delta Airlines, the impact on businesses was significant. When Chiquita announced its move near the end of 2011, the Cincinnati airport only had 191 departures to 52 cities.[7]

Good airports with plenty of daily departures and non-stop flights are essential to attracting and retaining big businesses. Time is money, and layovers increase the cost of travel for companies. Layovers also increase the chances of flight delays, which seem all too common.

Unfortunately for Ohioans and Ohio-based companies, the state's major airports are not improving and do not have plans to significantly expand. Even if demand for expansion existed, there is no good way to accommodate it in Columbus. As Matt Mayer details in his book *Taxpayers Don't Stand a Chance: Why Battleground Ohio Loses No Matter Who Wins (And What To Do About It)*, the Columbus airport has no room to grow because it is surrounded by buildings and highways. [8]

Declines in air traffic and jobs in Ohio are symptoms of greater systemic problems. Until the big issues, such as worker freedom, regulatory reform, and government spending, are addressed, Ohio will not be an engine for job creation relative to other states, and businesses will not flock here. Unfortunately, as the economy flounders, flight options decrease, which only further seals Ohio's fate as a laggard.

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[5] Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economy at a Glance" at *http://www.bls.gov/eag/* (November 24, 2013.

[6] The Cincinnati Enquirer, "Chiquita CEO thanks Cincinnati on way out," November 29, 2011, at *http://news.cincinnati.com/viewart/20111129/BIZ01/311290018/Chiquita-CEO-thanks-Cincinnati-way-out* (November 24, 2013).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Matt A. Mayer, "Taxpayers Don't Stand a Chance," page 64, July 2012, Provisum Strategies LLC. For more information about the book, visit *http://www.opportunityohio.org/book-2/*.

States	Number of Passengers				Rank			
	1990	2000	2010	2012	1990	2000	2010	2012
Alabama	1,870,450	2,483,208	2,572,460	2,504,076	33	34	34	34
Alaska	2,167,328	2,652,745	4,249,407	4,343,837	32	32	29	28
Arizona	12,023,994	18,734,023	20,563,259	21,363,387	13	10	10	9
Arkansas	950,328	1,671,406	1,760,847	1,786,414	38	37	37	37
California	50,737,807	71,339,347	70,405,459	73,932,942	1	1	1	1
Colorado	12,768,445	19,139,801	26,263,935	26,809,653	10	9	7	7
Connecticut	2,299,828	3,493,985	2,650,086	2,659,937	31	29	33	33
Delaware	0	0	1,520	1,716	-	-	50	50
Florida	31,409,664	46,560,351	54,617,396	55,823,449	3	3	3	3
Georgia	22,644,260	37,195,033	39,734,490	42,196,232	5	4	4	4
Hawaii	13,306,895	14,129,473	12,566,900	13,132,945	9	17	16	16
Idaho	731,929	1,578,417	1,718,574	1,622,673	40	38	38	39
Illinois	28,254,677	36,184,978	36,721,951	37,469,056	4	5	5	5
Indiana	3,100,870	4,453,777	4,456,695	4,299,455	27	27	28	29
Iowa	1,076,442	1,356,073	1,466,470	1,606,141	36	40	40	40
Kansas	561,331	529,674	824,482	844,905	42	44	44	45
Kentucky	4,989,662	11,817,810	5,993,564	5,051,130	23	19	26	27
Louisiana	4,133,759	5,886,145	5,222,448	5,481,176	25	26	27	25
Maine	601,428	568,469	1,079,121	1,050,359	41	43	43	43
Maryland	4,266,190	8,893,916	10,669,073	10,929,050	24	23	20	20
Massachusetts	8,911,779	10,856,796	11,974,920	12,630,985	17	20	17	17
Michigan	10,873,121	17,513,828	16,522,162	16,300,775	14	12	14	14
Minnesota	8,688,730	15,726,375	14,712,913	15,186,662	18	14	15	15
Mississippi	452,171	1,106,280	1,211,712	1,108,223	44	41	42	42
Missouri	12,603,953	20,732,991	11,404,903	11,513,399	12	7	19	19
Montana	745,463	1,053,734	1,507,127	1,696,499	39	42	39	38
Nebraska	1,187,324	2,035,551	2,304,755	2,243,386	35	36	35	35
Nevada	8,960,403	18,481,828	19,874,372	20,317,164	16	11	11	11
New Hampshire	267,363	1,513,783	1,396,136	1,220,572	47	39	41	41
New Jersey	9,345,715	12,920,845	11,558,253	12,116,723	15	18	18	18
New Mexico	2,384,433	3,034,414	2,928,141	2,750,235	30	31	32	32
New York	21,767,787	24,980,629	31,716,922	32,469,628	6	6	6	6
North Carolina	12,611,708	16,496,292	23,936,384	25,202,295	11	13	8	8
North Dakota	482,823	504,795	805,920	1,035,571	43	46	45	44
Ohio	7,704,130	10,545,397	9,728,743	9,618,939	21	21	23	21
Oklahoma	2,999,963	3,378,707	3,157,436	3,176,955	28	30	30	31
Oregon	3,350,614	6,958,234	7,304,572	7,890,275	26	25	24	24
Pennsylvania	15,556,038	19,544,543	18,621,296	18,108,587	7	8	12	12
Rhode Island	1,058,378	2,541,160	1,966,411	1,824,476	37	33	36	36
South Carolina	1,848,121	2,455,087	3,098,361	3,549,753	34	35	31	30
South Dakota	330,127	513,790	684,175	749,294	45	45	46	46
Tennessee	8,027,217	10,412,512	10,526,119	9,470,288	19	22	21	23
Texas	44,537,084	59,376,156	60,806,001	61,809,335	2	2	2	2
Utah	5,077,437	8,706,654	9,779,369	9,570,782	22	24	22	22
Vermont	306,479	279,408	645,375	619,370	46	47	47	47
Virginia	13,588,725	15,573,155	21,308,732	21,013,518	8	15	9	10
Washington	7,925,577	14,369,869	16,525,898	17,134,639	20	16	13	13
West Virginia	234,013	159,411	419,546	414,025	48	49	49	49
Wisconsin	2,743,695	4,264,638	6,414,243	5,218,478	29	28	25	26
Wyoming	145,813	165,797	508,730	503,417	49	48	48	48