

WEEKEND WAVE

05-13-16



Friday Economic Roundup

April, 2016 Passenger Traffic up 30% at Punta Gorda - New Record

Punta Gorda, FL - The Charlotte County Airport Authority announced the Punta Gorda Airport passenger count for April, 2016 was 98,101. This is the second largest monthly count ever and a **30.7% increase** in passenger traffic for April, 2016 compared with April, 2015 (74,995 passengers).

In April, there were 52,617 boarding passengers and 45,484 arriving passengers. This is the 30th month in a row that the Airport has seen an increase in passenger traffic in year over year monthly traffic.

Commissioner James W. Herston, of the Charlotte County Airport Authority, stated "It's good to see people are not only coming to the area to enjoy our beautiful Florida weather but those of us who live here have the opportunity to enjoy going north to see family and friends."

Alliegiant Air has non-stop service to **Thirty cities** including Akron Canton Airport, OH; Allentown, PA; Asheville, NC; Belleville, Il., Cedar Rapids, IA, Cincinnati, OH; Columbus, OH; Des Moines, IA; Ft. Wayne, IN; Grand Rapids, MI; Greenville/ Spartanburg, SC; Harrisburg, Pa., Huntington, WV; Indianapolis, IN; Kansas City, MO.; Knoxville, TN; Lexington, KY; Moline, IL; Niagara Falls, NY; Peoria, IL; Pittsburgh, PA; Plattsburgh, NY; Portsmouth, NH;

Raleigh, N.C., Rockford, IL; South Bend, IN; Springfield, IL; Springfield/Branson, MO; Toledo, OH; and Youngstown, OH. Allegiant Air can be reached at www.allegiantair.com or call 702-505-8888. Please check their schedule as some of the cities are seasonal.

The Charlotte County Airport Authority owns and operates the Punta Gorda Airport located at 28000 Airport Road in Punta Gorda, Florida.

For more information contact Mr. Gary Quill at 941-639-1101 ext. 101.

Kia of Port Charlotte stars in summer blockbuster

By GARY ROBERTS Staff Writer Charlotte Sun

PORT CHARLOTTE -The highly anticipated arrival of the Kia dealership in Port Charlotte is set for July, owner Billy Fuccillo said.

Fuccillo Automotive Group, which operates 24 Kia dealerships in New York and three more in Florida, will debut its latest, and largest, this summer on U.S. 41, just south of the Sarasota County line.

Currently, the 23-acre Kia of Cape Coral is the world's biggest Kia dealership, last year selling almost 10,000 vehicles, including 7,300 new cars and trucks. But Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte, covering 35 acres, will immediately seize that title.

"We're thinking huge," Fuccillo said.

In fact, the expansive site will become a distribution point for other Florida dealerships, allowing Fuccillo

Automotive Group to drop thousands of vehicles at one location when the new models come out, he said.

Kia of Port Charlotte also will boast the largest sales and service center among all Kia dealerships, with a nearly 50,000-square-foot facility, more than twice the size of the Cape Coral building.

And that's not all.

Fuccillo plans to develop retail and possibly a hotel on other land he owns adjacent to the Port Charlotte dealership. In 2012, Fuccillo bought a total of 77 acres of bank-owned property between U.S. 41 and Hillsborough Boulevard, south of South Cranberry Boulevard.

WBF Florida Properties III LLC, with Fuccillo listed as principal, bought the commercial land for \$3.1 million. The previous purchase price was \$15.68 million.

Fuccillo said the location was perfect, opening up the Kia franchise to traffic from both Charlotte County and the burgeoning North Port community.

"We're excited to be there," Fuccillo said.

And Charlotte County officials are just as thrilled to embrace the car kingpin, along with his \$13 million investment.

"I do believe it's a big deal, I mean, it's the largest dealership that he owns," said Bill Truex, county commission chairman. "It will bring new people into this area. You look at the number of Kias being sold out of Cape Coral right now, they'll be buying them here instead."

Charlotte County Administrator Ray Sandrock said the pursuit of Kia started with the county's Economic Development Office, and officials continued their quest for three years to bring this project to fruition. The final site plan was approved a year ago.

"It's something we've been waiting for and we welcome them as a great addition to our business community," Sandrock said.

Water service is newly available in the area, with sewer on its way. As a temporary measure, arrangements have been made for an on-site holding tank to handle sewage.

"We had a team of people who worked directly with him to address the needs as we went along," Sandrock said.

The final hurdle remains with the state. Kia is still awaiting Florida Department of Transportation permits for access to U.S. 41, officials said.



The new Fuccillo Kia of Port Charlotte will be the largest Kia dealership in the world when it debuts this summer at U.S. 41 and South Cranberry Boulevard.

Charlotte tech center now tech 'college'

By SOMMER BROKAW staff Charlotte Sun

CHARLOTTE COUNTY - Charlotte Technical Center is now Charlotte Technical College.

The college trains both adult and dual-enrolled high school students for careers and/or continued post-secondary education, and awards career certificates and applied technology diplomas, said CTC Director Deelynn Bennett.

The name change will not affect teachers or instruction but may remove negative perception of the school as a tech center, officials say.

"It's a great thing for high schools students that are career dual-enrolled students," Bennett said.

She added it's also "going to have a really positive impact on the community at large, and it's going to lend greater credibility, higher value, and improved image of our graduates to our employees and others in the community."

The School Board approved the name change this week.

"It really is a much more accurate description of what is happening at that center," said Board Chairwoman Barbara Rendell.

CTC Dental Assisting Program Director Darlene Riccio said it is more than a technical center because it's "preparing all students whether dual-enrolled or adult students for career skills through academic curriculum that is college level."

Teachers and students agree.

"A lot of people frown when they hear vocational school," said CTC Dental Assisting Teacher Cindy Gulsby.

There's a negative perception where people say things like "you can't go to college, so you're just going to settle for vocational school. Now that they've changed it to college, I think it's going to have an affect on how people think."

Gulsby added: "It's going to put us on the map because we have a lot to offer here."

Kyanna Ridore, a 20-year-old CTC dental assisting student from Englewood, said "it's more prestigious."

The former name as a center, "degrades what we do here," she added. "It's intense work, and it needs a more prestigious name."

Another dental assistant student, Emilio Llanes, 19, of Punta Gorda, agrees.

"I just think it makes us more official because the work we put in every day is already college level," Llanes said.

Bennett said it's about time for this change. She still hears people calling the school "vo-tech," which she said she believes is outdated considering a growing trend of career and technical educational schools being renamed as colleges.

Out of 48 public institutions offering technical education in Florida, 38 are technical colleges, and 10 are technical centers, Bennett said CTC was the only technical center located south of the Manatee County area.

"We were the only program south of Manatee County that was still using that particular terminology, and now this puts us on a level playing field," School Board Member Bob Segur said.

The school's name has already changed on its website, and Bennett said the full conversion of school signs, marquee and marketing materials, costing around \$40,000, should be mostly complete by the start of the next school year.

Atlanta Braves call off spring training talks with Collier County

Door still appears open for Charlotte-Sarasota area

By LAURA LAYDEN Daily News

It appears Collier County has struck out with the Atlanta Braves.

A face-to-face meeting between team representatives and county leaders planned for today has been called off.

The team has decided not to continue talks about the possibility of making Collier County its spring training home because the county can't meet the tight deadline for having a new stadium built by spring 2018, said Gary Price, a partner in Naples-based Fifth Avenue Advisors.

"We've always known the 2018 requirement could be a show stopper for us," he said.

The team, which is on pace to set a Major League record of 134 losses in a 162-game season, has been also eyeing locations in Palm Beach and Sarasota counties, with at least one of them promising to build a stadium by 2018.

"Apparently Sarasota has promised them 2018. I don't know that they are any further along with their site plans so I'm not sure how they are going to deliver 2018, but I've been told they can," Price said.

Sarasota County leaders have been largely mum about the project. The River Road and U.S. 41 intersection in the North Port area has been the target.

Price and others in his financial advisory firm have worked feverishly to bring the team and Major League Baseball to Collier. From the start, he said he was honest with team representatives telling them the county couldn't meet its aggressive deadline, but the team wanted to continue talks anyway - even after county commissioners rejected the Braves' preferred site along Collier Boulevard near Interstate 75 last month.

Price looked forward to introducing the team to County Manager Leo Ochs and other county leaders to talk about building the project at another site, he said, but then came the

disappointing call from a Braves representative last week saying: "We are not going to consider any site at this moment that can't deliver on a 2018 completion."

"The Braves have always been professional. They've always told us the truth. They've always told us 2018 is their goal. So none of this surprises us. Nothing about this shocks us," Price said.

Nearly a month ago, Fifth Avenue Advisors presented county commissioners with a plan to build a stadium on 160 acres of residentially zoned land owned by Naples-Stock Development directly off Collier Boulevard south of Forest Glen Golf & Country Club. Residents packed the commission chambers to oppose the location because it was too close to their homes, and all five commissioners said they were concerned about the proposed site in a residential area before rejecting it.

Price's team, working with county officials, had identified an alternative site at City Gate, a 288-acre commercial project off Collier Boulevard near Interstate 75. The project is zoned for 2.9 million square feet of buildings and commercial, light industry, office, warehouse and distribution uses. It's a mile deep along the Golden Gate canal, east of the interstate.

The new proposal would have put the stadium on about 75 to 100 acres of undeveloped land behind two hotels at City Gate and would have included ball fields on neighboring land owned by the county. Though the county-owned land spans 300 acres, it could take years to get all the required state and federal approvals to develop the vacant property so that's why it made sense to include land at City Gate, which would be quicker to rezone, Price said.

The private group's ultimate goal was to introduce county and team representatives to each other and to get them talking directly. That never happened, but it's not the county's fault, Price said. After county commissioners rejected the first site, he said Ochs and others, including Nick Casalanguida, a deputy county manager, immediately got to work in search of a more suitable location.

"We tried everything we could to pull all the pieces together," Price said.

Ron Rice, president of City Gate, said he was thrilled with the idea of having a stadium built on his land. After learning the county had rejected the Braves' first chosen site, he said he reached out to county leaders and the team's former president and general manager, John Schuerholz, who has a part-time home in Naples, to offer up his site for consideration. Rice said when he directed Schuerholz to his website to see an aerial view of his project, he immediately liked it, responding, "Wow what a great site at Collier Boulevard and I-75 and two hotels right by it."

There was no way to deliver the stadium at City Gate by 2018 because it would have required changes to a development of regional impact and a planned unit development, or PUD.

"It can't be done that quickly," Rice said. "It simply can't. Nobody has land that's zoned for this kind of use. Are you kidding?"

If the team, which is looking to relocate from Walt Disney World in Orlando, could wait another year, Collier might still be in the game.

"The problem was they had to be out of Disney's site and into a stadium by February of 2018," Rice said. "Now if it had been February of '19 we could have done it."

He's happy that at least his site was considered.

"The fact that it didn't materialize it's not the end of the world," Rice said. "We didn't buy that piece of property to build a baseball stadium. We're not upset. We are disappointed we couldn't meet the deadline of 2018."

County Commissioner Donna Fiala said she would be delighted with a location at City Gate away from homes. However, she said, the location wasn't her only concern. She was worried about where the money would come from to build the stadium and what it would cost taxpayers.

"They are talking about millions and millions of dollars and I don't think Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer are going to spend millions, millions and millions. They might be willing to pay a small part of it. We'd have to ask them," Fiala said.

Under the plan proposed by Fifth Avenue Advisors, the stadium would have cost the county nearly \$135 million in tourist tax dollars to build, finance, operate and maintain over 30 years. The county would pay a little over \$3 million a year to start, and its payments would increase yearly until more than doubling in 30 years to \$6.4 million.

Fifth Avenue Advisors estimates spring training would spur \$20 million a year in spending outside the stadium during the six weeks the team would be there.

Collier County Commissioner Tim Nance said he wasn't surprised to hear the Braves don't want to continue talks here. While he's not talked to anyone from the team, he understands the deadlines that can come with big economic development projects.

"The county for its part has to catch up to that schedule," he said. "They are not operating on the county's schedule, they are operating on their own private schedule."

Spending expected to rise at Florida ports

By JIM TURNER

NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA TALLAHASSEE - Nearly \$3.7 billion is projected to be spent - through state, local and private dollars - over the next five years to handle growing international trade at the majority of Florida seaports, according to a report released Monday by the Florida Ports Council.

The spending outline, which comes as the global economy sputters but Florida's ports record growth in cargo tonnage and cruise passengers, is a \$140 million increase - 4 percent - from a projected five-year capital improvement plan released a year ago.

More than half of the money in the latest five year plan is to flow through Port Canaveral, Port Everglades and Jax Port for large dredging projects and terminal facilities upgrades, while no expenditures are currently listed in the council's 2016 Seaport Mission Plan for Port St. Joe, Port of Fort Pierce or Port Citrus.

The report is expected to help the council argue for the continued flow of money for the industry, which has been one of Gov. Rick Scott's priorities since taking office in 2011.

Florida Ports Council President and CEO Doug Wheeler said the report shows more cargo is moving through the state. "It's another way for us to tell the story of what's happening in our ports around the state," Wheeler said.

The demand for deeper harbors and channels to handle ever-larger cargo ships, along with more cargo and passenger terminal facilities, comes as the World Bank Group's Global Economic Prospects report indicates China - which has surpassed Colombia as Florida's number two international trading partner - is in a commodities slump and there are economic contractions in Brazil. Brazil is easily Florida's top trading partner.

Still, the Ports Council report noted the state's seaports handled 3.5 million cargo containers in 2015, up 5.9 percent from the prior year.

The tonnage within the containers grew 6.6 percent year to year, while the value of the materials inside went down - a reflection of the surge in the U.S. dollar.

"I think I'd rather have the increase in volume of containers and tonnage," Wheeler said. "More volume, I see as really translating into eventually more jobs and that more people are touching those containers."

The report notes that the state's passenger cruise industry has also rebounded from the recession even though cruise passenger numbers recently dipped 2 percent.

The 15.2 million cruise passengers traveling through Key West, Jax Port, Port Miami, Port Canaveral, Port of Palm Beach and Port Everglades during the 2014-2015 season is the second highest in the past decade, surpassed only by the 15.6 million in 2013-2014 season.

Wheeler attributed the decline to ship maintenance and a few seasonal "repositionings" by cruise lines of some ships. The Ports Council also anticipates cruise lines bringing larger ships into the Florida fleet in the coming year.

The report doesn't make any projections regarding the recent opening of Cuba to passenger service.

Any projected state funding requires 50 percent matches from the local ports.

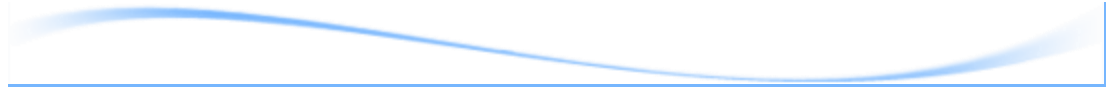
The Legislature provided about \$850 million for port upgrades and expansion during Scott's first five years in office. The biggest beneficiaries have been Port Miami, Jax Port, Port Tampa Bay and Port Canaveral.

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- Port Canaveral to host major event on Cuba, climate ([Orlando Sentinel](#))



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