

# Airport Plan Soars With Building

Eclipse Aviation project is part of a winning effort to lure air service, support businesses

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COLONIE -- A crane by Jersen Construction lifted two 17-ton steel canopies into place Tuesday morning as construction on the Eclipse Aviation factory service center nears completion at Albany International Airport.

The successful bid to attract Eclipse is part of an overall effort by the Albany County Airport Authority to build its general aviation and aircraft maintenance businesses. The Eclipse building, rising along the airport's main entry road, is joining smaller suppliers of maintenance services that are also filling critical niches at the airport.

Among them are Lansing Flight Support Inc. and ProAir Aviation LLC.

Lansing, which has been at Albany International for 12 years, has been adding mechanics as it provides more maintenance work for airlines serving the airport.

In some cases, commercial carriers have outsourced their maintenance to Lansing.

"Nobody else does the commercial work" at the airport, said Richard Edwards, the company's vice president. Lansing services the largest jets flying into Albany, as well as corporate jets of such companies as Wal-Mart and Coca-Cola.

The company has eight employees.

ProAir, which employs three and has been at the airport for a year, provides maintenance services to small private aircraft and some smaller corporate planes. Owner Dave Prescott also has begun offering flight lessons and aircraft rental, and operates additional facilities at airports along the East Coast.

He also subcontracts some of his work.



A regional carrier, Colgan Air Inc., also operates a maintenance facility at Albany International. Colgan was purchased in January by Pinnacle Airlines Corp., which also operates regional carrier Northwest Airlink. Colgan, meanwhile, provides regional airline services for such carriers as US Airways, Continental and United.

John O'Donnell, the airport's chief executive officer, said Pinnacle wants to expand Colgan's maintenance base at Albany, which now employs 70 people.

The new Eclipse service center is expected to have about 30 employees. And O'Donnell said he's talking with other aircraft service providers about locating at the airport, but declined to identify them.

Eclipse spokesman Andrew Broom said the manufacturer of very-light jets, which hold up to six passengers, expects the Albany facility to be completed in July. Owners of the jets, including air-taxi companies and private individuals, would bring their planes here for servicing.

The \$8 million structure is being built by the airport authority, which will lease it to Eclipse. The center received \$1.6 million in state money. Eclipse will pay the authority \$11.9 million over the 20-year lease period.

Eclipse has an order backlog of more than 2,500 aircraft, which sell for about \$1.52 million each. The earliest available delivery date is in January 2009, Broom said.

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