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## **Senator Shelby and Port of Huntsville Cut Ribbon on West Runway Extension Project**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huntsville, AL...After three and half years of research, grant applications, design and construction, the \$31,123,560.00 West Runway Extension project is now complete. The extension added 4,600 feet bringing the 8,000 ft. west runway to 12,600 feet. A celebration was held today to cut the ribbon for the new extension.

Senator Richard Shelby has been an advocate of this project from its inception. Senator Shelby said, "I was pleased to support this extremely important project for the Huntsville International Airport. The extension of the runway will create a competitive advantage in the air cargo arena for Huntsville/Madison County, and will produce significant economic development opportunities for the region."

"This is a great day for Huntsville International Airport," stated Rick Tucker, Executive Director, Port of Huntsville. "The opening of the runway extension brings us closer to the global marketplace than ever before. We are so appreciative of the many partners in this project, but none more so than Senator Richard Shelby."

This expansion will expand airfield capacity providing existing or new carriers opportunities to maximize payloads on existing long haul markets directly from Huntsville. This length of runway is needed to provide direct service to Asia and the Pacific Rim using a Boeing 747-400 aircraft under typical all-cargo loading conditions. Huntsville International will be able to accommodate larger, faster and/or more efficient aircraft at the airport while expanding airfield capacity to increase efficiency of existing operations. The new 12,600 foot runway is second to Miami as having the longest runway in the Southeast

The longer runway can accommodate any aircraft in production or development today, including the Airbus 380 – the largest commercial aircraft currently being designed. A longer, and therefore more versatile, runway will also make the Port of Huntsville even more attractive to a regional, domestic or international cargo hubbing operation. By

increasing opportunities to serve new worldwide destinations we are enhancing job growth in the Tennessee Valley region and complimenting the existing operations at the Air Cargo Center.

A runway extension project was identified as being needed by the Airport Authority in the late 80's. It was preliminarily determined that a runway of 12,500 feet would be necessary to accommodate non-stop passenger and all-cargo freighter service to Europe and Latin America. In the early 90's the east runway was lengthened from 8,000 to 10,000 feet in anticipation of the airports future cargo needs. This project was well founded in that air cargo growth at Huntsville International Airport averaged double digit annual growth from 1995 through the first half of 2001. In fact, in 2000, Huntsville International was number 59 of all U.S. cargo airports for total metric tons.

The runway extension will allow Huntsville International Airport to maintain its role as a significant air cargo airport facility serving both the rapidly expanding domestic and international air cargo market. In addition, it will support economic growth on a local, regional and national level.

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