

THE INSIDE STORY



Letter of Intent with Xi'an Xianyang International Airport for Air Cargo Development

In November 2007, Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato, Allegheny Conference on Community Development CEO Mike Langley, and Allegheny County Airport Authority Chairman Glenn Mahone announced the signing of a letter of intent with China's Xi'an Xianyang International Airport to establish a strategic air cargo partnership. The letter of intent, seen as the first step in building an "Air Silk Road" between Xi'an and Southwestern Pennsylvania, was signed when representatives from the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development, Allegheny County Airport Authority and Pittsburgh Regional Alliance met with Xi'an officials in China.

In April 2007, Onorato led a delegation of local business leaders on a trade mission to China, which included stops in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai to meet with Chinese business leaders, state officials and other decision makers, as well as representatives of more than one dozen Pittsburgh-based companies currently doing business in China. The mission, dubbed Opportunity China 2007, was the first of its kind to the Far East in more than five years and is part of a long-term, multi-year strategy that aims to expand export activities to China and promote the strengths of businesses in the Pittsburgh region to potential Chinese investors. The signing of the letter of intent was a direct result of the trade mission in April.

Pittsburgh International Airport is located within 500 miles of nearly half the population of the United States and Canada, as well as nearly half of U.S. business markets. The airport also offers access to 63 percent of the industrial output of the United States by overnight truck or one-hour flight. More than 5,000 acres of the airport are designated as a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ), including the airport's fuel farm, which offers significant fuel savings and an extra advantage for cargo shippers. Pittsburgh International also provides easy access to major highway systems, three class-one railroads, the nation's second busiest inland port, and more than 200 air and surface freight companies.

Xi'an Xianyang International Airport is the largest airport in north central China, and one of China's top 10 airports overall. Due to Chinese western expansion, passenger and cargo flights are increasing rapidly. Xi'an Xianyang International Airport is within a two-hour flight of 75 percent of China's land mass and 80 percent of its economic resources. Currently, the airport connects to 79 other cities domestically and internationally.

Xi'an is the eastern terminus of the ancient Silk Road, a 5,000-mile-long trade route that linked the Roman Empire in the West with imperial China in the East. In the late 13th Century, Marco Polo became the first European to travel the entire route to China during a visit to the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan.

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