



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Secures Funding to Attract New Carrier, New Destination at Watertown International Airport

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State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing she has secured \$200,000 in state funding for the Watertown International Airport to add a second travel carrier, which in turn will add a second, non-stop destination from Watertown.

Senator Ritchie makes this announcement as airport officials from across the state begin to gather in Clayton for the New York State Aviation Management Association's annual Fall

Conference and Exhibit Show. This is the first time in 30 years the event has been held in Jefferson County.

The new route provides the traveling public a second option as a destination or layover in addition to the non-stop flights already offered to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It will also provide 10th Mountain Division soldiers, their families and Fort Drum's guests with much needed travel options.

"In recent years, we have seen the exciting growth that is happening at Watertown International Airport. Its success is critical to not only those who use the airport, but for our regional economies," Senator Ritchie said. "Adding a second destination allows the airport to strengthen its impact on our communities and Fort Drum. I am a proud supporter of the Watertown International Airport and I am confident this new destination will allow it to reach new heights."

Since increasing the size of its runway to more than 7,000 feet, and introducing a larger 50-seat jet for its flights to Philadelphia, the Watertown International Airport has not only broken monthly traveler records, but it has easily eclipsed the required 10,000 passengers a year needed to qualify for \$1 million in annual funding from the Federal Aviation Administration. The airport saw nearly 50,000 passengers in 2017.

"With every investment made in the Watertown International Airport, we are seeing just how important it is to our community. We are breaking passenger records every year and by attracting an additional air carrier and a second destination, we only expect that growth to continue and for Watertown to become a place people want to fly in and out of," Watertown International Airport Manager Grant Sussey said. "We cannot thank Senator Ritchie enough for her support, vision and trust in what this airport is and what it can become."

“This has been a tremendous year for the Watertown International Airport and we are extremely excited for what the future holds next year and beyond,” Jefferson County Board of Legislature Chair Scott Gray said. “This investment from Senator Ritchie can only ensure the future of this airport as it continues to exceed expectations and become a major contributor to our local economy.”

“These last two years have shown that the demand for our airport is strong. If you look around, this is becoming a top-notch facility,” Jefferson County Legislator Phil Reed said. “By adding a second carrier and destination, we are not only giving our growing number of travelers a second option, we are offering something that will bring in new travelers looking for a destination we didn’t have before. Senator Ritchie clearly sees what is happening with our airport and wants to make sure it has a big impact on our entire community.”

The funding comes from the new state budget’s “Military Base Retention Fund.” Senator Ritchie played a key role in the creation of the Military Base Retention Fund, which was established in 2012. Since that time, it has funded a number of Fort Drum-related causes, including enhancing health care services benefitting troops and families, helping to purchase critical equipment for fire departments and first responders that serve Fort Drum and surrounding communities and expanding “buffer areas” around the post’s perimeter to prevent overdevelopment near key training areas, among other needs.