

What the resumption of this flight means for St. Johns County economic development

By Jensen Werley
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Frontier Airlines recently restarted service at North Florida Regional Airport.

Frontier Airlines announced it will resume nonstop service at Northeast Florida Regional Airport in St. Augustine to Philadelphia International Airport on April 21.

The flight is a significant boost to St. Johns County's economic development, said Melissa Glasgow, director of economic development.

"It's important to have connections to major metro airport hubs," Glasgow told the Business Journal. "To have that connectivity to major markets is important for economic development."

Glasgow said that the flights help boost economic development, because they create a direct pipeline to other cities and increases Northeast Florida's exposure.

Glasgow saw that firsthand, when she happened to sit next to Philadelphia businessman Bob Cooper on a flight from St. Augustine to Philly.

Cooper, a longtime tech entrepreneur who now works as an entrepreneurship coach, splits his time between Philadelphia and his new second home in St. Augustine.

But it was while sitting next to Glasgow that the two got to talking about the two cities and economic development in the area.

"I work as a business adviser to CEOs of B2B service-based businesses and I'm looking to expand my network in Florida," he said. "My clients are always looking for resources and I end up being this connector and referral point for other people."

In addition to wanting to make those connections to local businesses, Cooper said that with the way tech is going where employees can work out of the office or in one of several offices, it makes sense for companies to open up shop in Northeast Florida, where they can have a great lifestyle and work for the company they want to work for.

Glasgow said people like Cooper show that people who have the means to get to Northeast Florida — for example, via direct flights like Frontier's — can create a path for economic development in the area.

"You have a gentleman who had business interests, came here on a regular basis, business resources and could make referrals to connections he had locally," she said. "You can see the potential for economic development opportunities just from that one interaction.... This flight validates our area as a viable destination for tourism and economic development opportunity."