

GSP wins small airport

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Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport won a 2011 U.S. ANNIE award as the fastest-growing small airport category.

The ANNIE awards are presented by anna.aero, the Airline Network News & Analysis, a free and open website dedicated to outstanding airline network planning intelligence.

In the 500,000 to 2 mil-

lion seat-capacity category, GSP beat out Orlando Sanford airport. The figures are based on October 2011 capacity as compared with October 2010 capacity.

Last year, GSP had a total of 1,268,202 passengers arriving and leaving from the airport, up 1.15 percent from 2009. Passenger traffic has increased significantly this year as other airlines increased their traffic to compete with Southwest Airlines' lower fares.

Prior to the arrival of Southwest, GSP lost more than 60 percent of its potential market to nearby airports because of the high fare structure. The airport also suffered from the lack of direct or one-stop flights to the West Coast.

"It certainly qualified the fact that we are growing," said Rosylin Weston, GSP spokeswoman. "It compares us to our peers. In this snapshot, we are outpacing those peers."

In the 2 million to 5 mil-

lion seat capacity category, Charleston International Airport also won the ANNIE for fastest-growing airport, ahead of the Birmingham, Ala., airport.

Southwest began service to GSP and Charleston in March of this year.

Organizers of the award use capacity data as a proxy for airline demand. anna.aero uses four airport size categories to determine which airports have reported the greatest increase in scheduled seat

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growth award

capacity.

Also, Southwest Airlines retained its U.S. ANNIE for the most new routes by adding three new destinations and 27 new routes.

Southwest is the only airline or airport to retain its U.S. ANNIE award for a second straight year. Last year, the Dallas-based carrier started 31 routes and dropped nine, whereas this year it started 31 and dropped just four for a net gain of 27.

The 31 new routes included five to its new destination, Greenville-Spartanburg, four to the new destination Charleston, and six to Newark, N.J., another new destination. A further six involved the expanding at Denver and another three to Phoenix. Seven of the new routes lined various destinations together.

Runner-up Spirit Airlines had a net gain of 15 routes, having started 22 but dropped seven.