

NEW YORK STEWART INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CARGO HUB OF THE NORTHEAST

In 2015, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress conducted a study on behalf of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey of strategies to enhance the usage of New York Stewart International Airport. Among the recommendations called for increased cargo usage.

The airport sits on or adjacent to nearly 900 acres of developable real estate and has easy access to the New York State Thruway and Interstate Highway 84. The potential for New York Stewart International Airport to become a true hub of commerce in the age of automation and electronic retail is unmatched by any other site in the Northeast. It has been five years since Pattern made this suggestion. The ability of the Port Authority to increase commercial flights has proven to be a challenge. However, the need for increased distribution networks of goods has grown dramatically due to online purchases.

Currently, John F. Kennedy International airport in Queens is the number one international airfreight cargo portal in the United States, with over 100 cargo-carriers operating in the airport. All of this cargo is sorted at facilities in New York City and then shipped around the country via other airline or trucks.

The cargo distribution of goods by truck from JFK puts an ever increasing strain on the already overburdened roads of New York City and adjacent counties to reach their final destination. Why not lessen the traffic burden and decrease the amount of fossil fuels burned while sitting in traffic for these trucks by importing and sorting cargo on-site at New York Stewart International, where trucks can then make their way directly onto I-87 or I-84 and nearby locations in New York City, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Northern New Jersey? Pattern recommends that New York State and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey open up the nearly 900 acres of land surrounding Stewart Airport to become a hub of airfreight cargo for this part of the United States.

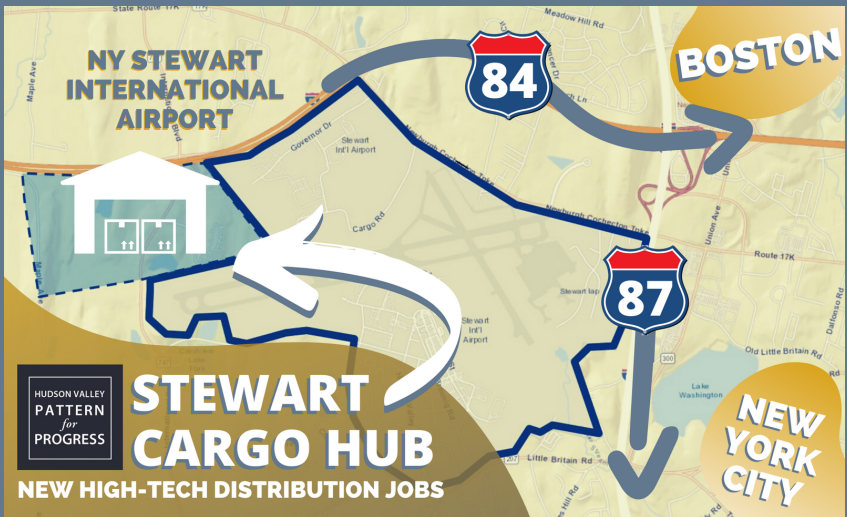
Pattern's latest report, "Out of Alignment", a study of the Hudson Valley region in the decade from the Great Recession through 2018, cautioned relying on warehouse jobs to bolster the economy due to notoriously low wages, shift-work with long hours, little to no benefits, and the imminent threat of automation in the distribution industry over the next decade. Pattern envisions this new hub at Stewart to create the types of facilities that would be designed specifically with the future of freight logistics in mind, a future which is more automated, computerized, and uses high tech facilities for the movement of cargo. These automated warehouses would likely provide fewer low-skilled jobs than traditional warehouses, yet may create new high-skilled jobs with higher pay, better hours, and more benefits.

New York Stewart International Airport - Cargo Hub of the Northeast

For example, instead of creating 100 “picker and packer” type jobs with perhaps a dozen manager and administration jobs at a traditional warehouse facility, these proposed facilities could create dozens of high-paying jobs for software engineers, management, administration, robot mechanics, and other related fields. By increasing the amount of cargo planes landing at the airport and building directly on and adjacent to the airport site, dozens of new aviation related jobs would also be created to service planes operating the shipping routes.

The presence of these cargo operations should not interfere with the airports desire to continue to attract charter and passenger flights while creating higher paying jobs. The likely firms to attract are USPS, FedEx, UPS, and Amazon – some of which already have operations on a smaller scale at the airport. The uptick in cargo flights would be a natural fit as adjacent to Stewart, large military cargo planes land routinely.

Stewart Airport has excess capacity for planes and plenty of space to handle the cargo. Continuing to overburden the New York City airports and roadways with increasing amounts of airfreight will only lead to increased impacts on passenger flights and local roads, as well as further damage to the environment by burning more fossil fuels. With the lowest unemployment in decades in the Hudson Valley, now is not the time to invest in projects that will create jobs for the sake of creating jobs. Pattern envisions a training center for these jobs, a shuttle service to the cities of Middletown and Newburgh for enhanced employment opportunities, as well as workforce housing on site. Now is the time to think about the future of work and invest in jobs that will exist for decades to come, and will pay wages that families can prosper on in the Hudson Valley.



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