Greater Connectivity to spur Greater Economic Growth

By Emily Younger Barnwell

Direct travel to and from the Air Capital of the World has become more seamless.

Several dozen distinguished Wichita community leaders, federal officials and representatives from American Airlines gathered to commemorate the inaugural daily direct flight from Wichita, Kansas to Washington, D.C. on Jan. 8.

The gate celebration, featuring U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, U.S. Congressman Ron Estes, American Airlines Managing Director Phillip Newman and Director of Airports Jesse Romo, highlighted not only the convenience of the newly established flight but also Wichita's growing global connectivity.

The heightened connectivity is particularly significant for federal work, especially in the defense sector.

"This is not something they (American Airlines) would do if the assets and the nature of Wichita were not what they are. They

are not going to in kindness decide to have a flight from Wichita to D.C. They are doing it because they can see they can make money and there will be the passengers to do so," said Senator Jerry Moran. "All the things that are occurring in Wichita make that statement, circumstance true. We are growing. We are growing in defense, in cybersecurity, in aviation and aerospace, in space itself, and we are growing because this community is the kind of community it is."

Congressman Ron Estes echoed Moran's statement adding this is a premier opportunity for tourists, federal officials and companies alike.

"It is great today to be able to connect the Air Capital to the capital of the United States," Congressman Estes emphasized. "We want to make sure as we grow in Wichita that we are able to take advantage of world-class service like we are today."

The new nonstop flight from Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport is a noteworthy addition to the array of direct flights now available from Wichita.

In November, the airport began daily nonstop flights connecting Wichita to Phoenix, Las Vegas and Miami, enhancing Wichita's appeal for leisure travel and for businesses looking to expand or relocate.

"Increasing our direct flights is a core strategy for economic growth. The direct flight to Washington D.C. further connects the Wichita region to key opportunities on the East Coast, strengthening our community's defense industry competitiveness, global connectivity and talent recruitment efforts," said Greater Wichita Partnership President Jeff Fluhr.

A robust air transportation network contributes to the overall economic health of the region by streamlining travel for professionals engaged in commerce, ultimately boosting business activities and generating new economic opportunities.

In addition, access to a variety of direct flights is a key factor for attracting and retaining top talent. Improving air service is one of the 13 priorities of the Partnership's Talent Roadmap.

"By offering direct flights to major cities, Wichita becomes a more desirable location for skilled workers, making it easier for companies to attract and retain the best talent," Fluhr explained. "Sustaining and expanding air services in the years ahead relies on the collective effort of the community to fill the flights consistently."

Continued efforts are underway to increase affordable and accessible transportation to and from the Air Capital of the World including the proposed extension of the Heartland Flyer passenger rail service.