

During a news conference highlighting successes at the Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport Thursday afternoon, Senator Patrick Leahy told Rutland area leaders and airport officials that he and Congressman Peter Welch have secured a new \$925,000 federal appropriation to install an Instrument Landing System (ILS) at the airport that will make coming and going at the airport safer and more reliable.

Leahy, Welch, the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce, and the Southern Vermont Regional Airport called the news conference to highlight three recent successes at the airport: the completion of a lighting system at the airport, the continued success of commercial air service as a result of the federal Essential Air Service program, and the planned construction of an ILS in the coming two years.

"Today we are celebrating three great successes that have made the Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport more accessible, safer, and a stronger pillar in the region's economy," Leahy said. "These are more than investments in lights, instruments and seats on a plane. They are investments in the fabric of Southern Vermont's economy – where Vermonters depend on reliable air service to bring tourists in and connect Vermonters to the world."

"This is a great step in the growth and evolution of the Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport," Welch said. "For those who live and work in the Rutland region, these improvements are valuable investments that will strengthen the business environment and economy for a long time to come. I'm very excited for all those who have worked to make this airport a success, and I look forward to continuing this partnership."

"The Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport is a vital part of the region's social and economic success," said Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tom Donahue. "Senator Leahy's and Congressman Welch's support of the airport has helped create new opportunities for businesses, people and pilots which translates to more jobs and a higher quality of life in the region."

"Having a full precision instrument landing system will undoubtedly make Rutland-Southern Vermont Regional Airport a more viable and competitive airport," said Airport Manager David Carman. "From Cape Air, overnight cargo, and the many business aircraft we see on the ramp, they will all benefit from ILS. It is reassuring to pilots when making their decision to fly here by

improving the chances that a plane won't have to divert elsewhere due to low visibility. It's like a welcome sign for pilots, even when visibility is poor."

The Leahy/Welch appropriation for the ILS was secured in the 2010 federal transportation budget. The ILS is a ground-based instrument approach system that provides precision guidance to an aircraft approaching and landing on a runway, using a combination of radio signals and lighting arrays. The ILS will enable a safe landing during bad weather, such as low ceilings or reduced visibility due to fog, rain, or snow. Airport officials said the system will be in place no later than 2012.

During the news conference, airport officials said that Cape Air continues to have success in the Rutland market. According to the Cape Air estimates, more than 1,100 passengers flew to and from Rutland in July representing more than a 70 percent load factor. Leahy has been a long time supporter of the federal Essential Air Service program that currently provides Cape Air with an approximate \$800,000 subsidy to ensure air service between Boston and Rutland. In the past five years alone, attempts have been made to reduce the size of the EAS program, threatening Rutland's subsidy, but Leahy and like-minded members of Congress have successfully defended the program.

During Thursday's news conference, airport officials also formally celebrated the completion of a new lighting system that was constructed last year – reducing visibility restricted landing from three quarters of a mile to one half of a mile. Leahy said that by reducing visibility restrictions, the lighting system allows planes to safely land in bad weather reducing delays, cancellations and inconveniences to general aviation activities. Leahy and Welch secured \$1.32 million to complete construction of the lighting system in federal fiscal year 2008. Leahy had worked with then Senator Jim Jeffords in federal fiscal year 2003 to secure \$1 million to design and begin construction of the system.

"Given the often unpredictable nature of weather in northern New England, the new ILS allows aircraft to arrive safely with lower cloud ceilings permitting more reliable and consistent air service," said Cape Air President Dan Wolf. "On behalf of all of us at Cape Air and from our air travel partner, Jet Blue Airways, our sincere thanks to the federal, state and local officials who worked so hard to make this happen. We appreciate your support and look forward to a busy fall and winter season."