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Robert S. Bowen, A.A.E. Announces Retirement as Norfolk Airport Authority Executive Director

Robert S. Bowen, the Norfolk Airport Authority's Executive Director, will be retiring from his position effective March 1, 2022. Malcolm P. Branch, Chairman of the Norfolk Airport Authority Board of Commissioners, made the announcement today at the Board's regularly scheduled meeting.

Bowen's retirement will mark the completion of a forty-five-year career at the Norfolk International Airport which began with a summer job in 1974 at the Piedmont Aviation fixed base operation. Upon graduating from Old Dominion University in 1975, he returned to Piedmont as an aircraft line serviceman. After a succession of promotions at Piedmont, he joined the Norfolk Airport Authority in January 1988, serving first as Director of Operations, then Deputy Executive Director, and as Executive Director since March 1, 2016. Bowen is the Airport Authority's third Executive Director, following Wayne E. Shank and Kenneth R. Scott, and has been an Accredited Airport Executive since 1995. He is an Executive Member of the Virginia Airport Operators Council which represents the Commonwealth's sixty-six public-use commercial and general aviation airports and has served as its President.

Bowen's tenure as Executive Director has been a continuation of the vigorous infrastructure capital improvement programs to continuously modernize and improve the Airport. Since 2016 under his leadership, the Airport Authority has initiated 120 capital improvement projects at a combined cost of \$170 million. Bowen also oversaw an expansion of air service to include the ultra-low-cost carriers of Allegiant, Frontier and Breeze. Of particular note, the Airport gained its first non-stop service to the West Coast (San Diego) in 2018, which continues to this day.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been the Airport's greatest challenge as passenger activity in 2020 fell 55 percent from its highest levels in 2019. Passenger activity has recently rebounded, and in May 2021 passenger activity was only 18 percent below May 2019's record.

Chairman Branch added, "Robert Bowen has devoted over four decades of dedicated service and leadership to Norfolk International Airport. He leaves a legacy of excellence that will be visible for years to come at every corner of the Airport and within the organization he has led. His steady hand, particularly through the pandemic, leaves the Airport poised to quickly return to pre-COVID service."

The selection process for the next Executive Director will be conducted by the Norfolk Airport Authority Board of Commissioners.

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