

Skybus shuts down, travel plans disrupted

by Kaitlin Ugolik, April 9, 2008

Unable to cover the cost of jet fuel, Skybus Airlines, a budget airline based in Columbus, Ohio, ceased operation Saturday.

Hundreds of passengers were left stranded after the abrupt closing. The company filed bankruptcy on Monday and is in at least \$50 million of debt.

The news hits the Triad particularly hard as the airline just opened a hub at Greensboro's Piedmont Triad International Airport last year. At the time government officials praised the airline's presence as a way to boost the Greensboro economy and save a struggling airport.

"I am personally saddened by this news," Henry Isaacson, chairman of the Piedmont Triad Airport Authority, told the Greensboro News & Record. "I am saddened for the people of the Triad. My goal was to provide them with low-fare airline service, and as of this moment, that has failed."

Several Elon students whose hometowns are in Ohio are among the former Skybus customers whose travel plans have been affected.

"There really isn't any reliable alternative for cheap flights anymore," sophomore Brian Fisher said. He often used Skybus to go home to Columbus. He planned on catching a \$10 flight to his brother's graduation from Richmond University in May.

Freshman Riley Beetner used the airline every time she flew home to Columbus during the past year. Her family had several flights planned when the airline abruptly closed.

The Skybus Web site directs former customers to contact their credit card companies for possible refunds.

"The credit card company has had a lot of problems reimbursing people, considering the tickets were purchased months ago," Beetner said.

Her parents are in the process of trying to get refunds.

Some parents of graduating seniors at Elon who booked flights through Skybus will also have to make other arrangements to make it to their students' graduation.

Junior Patrick Tweel had some bad experiences with Skybus, but said that with such cheap tickets, he got what he paid for.

"Since Skybus opened, it was the primary means of transportation between Columbus and Greensboro. I even used it going to NYC over Spring Break."

Now, he said, he'll have to use less convenient and more expensive transportation to get to and from Elon.

Beetner is also concerned about her rising travel costs.

“In future travel I will either have to find other flights or drive home,” she said. “Flying home would not be much of a problem, except for the fact that flights can end up costing upwards of \$350.”

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