

## **Regional air taxis expand travel options**

By Bruce Edwards Herald Staff

September 22, 2008

Rutland air travelers have another option from getting here to there — though it's not for everyone.

Linear Air operates an air taxi service providing pre-arranged flights to and from airports around the Northeast and Canada.

Based in Concord, Mass., Linear Air began serving Rutland area business and leisure travelers four years ago.

Company founder and CEO Bill Herp said his regional air taxi business offers the business or leisure traveler a quick and convenient way to get from Point A to Point B and back in just a few hours, usually within a 500-mile radius.

Herp said that's a significant advantage particularly at a time when commercial airlines are cutting back on flights, increasing ticket prices and adding fuel surcharges.

Linear Air has a fleet of four eight-passenger, single-engine Cessna Grand Caravan turboprops and four three-passenger Eclipse jets.

"The Eclipse jet goes about twice as fast and a little bit farther but still about 500 miles and is well suited for business trips where jet speed and efficiency is important," Herp said. "The Cessna Caravan turboprop is probably better suited for leisure or personal trips where you get a larger number traveling and you need to take bags and that sort of thing."

Not unlike a taxi that charges by the mile, Linear charges by the hour. For the Caravan, the price is \$1,125 an hour while the Eclipse runs \$1,795 an hour with a typical day trip averaging between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

Herp says that eight passengers splitting the cost on the Caravan brings the per-person cost down to \$300 to \$400 and on the Eclipse it averages \$1,000 to \$1,500 per person.

Time equates to money for the business traveler and Herp points out that his point-to-point air taxi service eliminates the hassle of long lines at the airport, changing planes and being at the mercy of airline schedules. Business travelers using his service can conduct business in a day, eliminating the cost of an overnight stay, he said.

The Eclipse, a generation of Very Light Jets, is so fuel efficient, Herp said it uses about half the gas as a Caravan.

He also points out that Linear ([linearair.com](http://linearair.com)) waives what's known as a repositioning fee — the cost to get the plane from its home base to the client's airport. Linear waives the fee for airports like Rutland that are within 100 miles of Hanscom Field in Bedford or within 100 miles of its other base of operations at Westchester County Airport in White Plains, N.Y.

The repositioning fee for the Caravan is usually \$625 an hour and for the Eclipse the fee is \$895. Unlike many charter operators, Linear also doesn't have a fuel surcharge.

"You can think of it as being virtually based at Rutland because the pricing for someone departing from Rutland is the same as it would be if they were departing from one of our bases," he said.

Prior to starting Linear Air, Herp founded e-Dialog, an online marketing technology company based in Lexington, Mass. Running a company that required frequent traveling by his employees, Herp became convinced there was a better and more cost-effective way to get around the Northeast. It was also about that time that the fuel-efficient Eclipse jet was being developed. His solution was to start an air taxi business.

"If the economics being talked about really happen, there's going to be a big opportunity among a lot of people, including guys like me, who run businesses that have a significant need to take teams of people on these regional trips and get them (there) efficiently and get them back," said Herp, who is a pilot himself.

He said there is a healthy demand for his service. In the past year, Linear has visited 168 non-hub airports with clients split evenly between business and leisure travelers.