

# The Columbus Dispatch

## Port Columbus passenger totals, fares on the rise

By **Marla Matzer Rose** *The Columbus Dispatch* • Tuesday April 26, 2016 4:22 PM

Port Columbus last month marked its 25th consecutive month of passenger growth, according to data released Tuesday by the Columbus Regional Airport Authority. The airport saw its busiest March since 2008, with 631,754 travelers departing and landing — an 8.3 percent increase over March 2015.

The airport's biggest carrier, Southwest Airlines, reported that both flight and passenger totals were up more than 18 percent.

At Rickenbacker Airport, Allegiant Air continued to grow. The airport's only regularly scheduled passenger carrier saw a 28.3 percent increase in passengers for March as it added 20 percent more flights.

Cargo totals at Rickenbacker fell because of last year's surge in shipments related to a West Coast port strike. Cargo freight decreased by 35.8 percent. If last year's strike-related shipments were removed, cargo shipments would have been up more than 8 percent this March, said David Whitaker, an airport authority vice president.

As it adds flights and passengers, Port Columbus also has seen fares rise. According to data released Tuesday by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Port Columbus' average fare exceeded the U.S. average for the third straight year in 2015. The average fare from Port Columbus was \$378.45 in the fourth quarter of 2015, compared with the national average of \$362.56.

Whitaker has noted that Port Columbus fares do not reflect the low-cost service from Allegiant at Rickenbacker. Frontier Airlines also is expected to help lower some fares when it returns to Columbus in June.

Cleveland and Cincinnati, meanwhile, have seen fares decline in the wake of losing hubs from United Airlines and Delta Air Lines, respectively. Cincinnati, which for years had the highest fares in the nation, saw fares hit a 20-year low of \$411.43 last year; Cleveland's average of \$337.28 now is lower than Columbus'.