



PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Further Reductions to Aviation Programs Are Possible and an Aviation Management Authority is Needed

Summary

North Carolina Session Law 2011-145 directed the Program Evaluation Division to revisit issues raised in the division's 2010 reports on state aircraft by evaluating the consolidation of air services provided by the Department of Transportation, the State Bureau of Investigation, and the University of North Carolina passenger mission, and further studying the formation of an Aviation Management Authority for all state aircraft. This report addresses four questions.

- 1. Are North Carolina's passenger aircraft meeting the minimum annual flight-hour threshold?** All airplanes operated by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the University of North Carolina's Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) met the 200-hour efficiency threshold for passenger air service in Calendar Year 2011, but the DOT helicopter flew only 66 hours. Because State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) airplanes were primarily used for law enforcement activities, the passenger efficiency threshold did not apply. However, SBI flight logs showed minimal use and alternatives should be explored to reduce the number of aircraft in its fleet.
- 2. Can aircraft, personnel, or facilities be eliminated to reduce expenditures?** DOT's helicopter could be eliminated, but it provides important functions and there are few alternatives to secure these services. Eliminating the SBI facility and housing SBI aircraft at the DOT facility would result in \$111,230 in annual savings. Current staffing levels for all three programs are appropriate.
- 3. Would consolidation of passenger aircraft result in an improved level of service?** Although DOT and AHEC both operate passenger transportation missions, consolidation would present logistical difficulties because the programs have different utilization and scheduling patterns. Further consolidation of passenger air service would therefore not result in improved service.
- 4. Should North Carolina establish an Aviation Management Authority?** An Aviation Management Authority is needed to ensure efficient and effective use of state aircraft. Although state aviation programs have made progress on implementing fleet management practices since 2010, additional improvements are needed.