

# Landing Excel-Jet

*Aviation officials excited about company's relocation to Guthrie*

By JOE GRAY

GUTHRIE NEWS LEADER

Thanks to a decision by the Guthrie Industrial Development Authority on Tuesday evening to begin drafting an agreement to help secure a loan, Colorado Springs aircraft manufacturer Excel-Jet will be moving to Guthrie according to company founder Bob Bornhofen.

The Authority voted unanimously to approve a resolution authorizing city staff to draw up an agreement to provide backing for a loan of \$375,000 to the aircraft company. Once the agreement is drafted, the proposal will come back to the Development Authority for final approval.

Excel-Jet is in the final stages of FAA certification on its Sport-Jet design, a single-engine, four-passenger airplane which the company's Web site describes as "the most affordable and insurable jet aircraft ever designed for the General Aviation pilot."

Under the company's plan, the \$375,000 loan backed by the City would purchase the primary jet engine for the flight-test aircraft, and final certification could be complete within 60 days thereafter. Once certified, the company will formally begin accepting orders for new aircraft, and an assembly operation would be set up in Guthrie.

According to Excel-Jet's



Photo provided by Bob Bornhofen

**The airframe of Excel-Jet's Sport-Jet is currently housed in the company's corporate headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo. Once the plane's production engine is installed, the plane is expected to be brought to Guthrie for the final phases of its FAA certification.**

market projections, the company expects to be able to sell upwards of 200 aircraft per year at a price tag of approximately \$1.1 million each, Bornhofen said.

While the primary parts used in the aircraft would be shipped in from manufacturers in other areas, the physical assembly of the aircraft would take place in Guthrie.

Depending on market factors, the plant could provide 300-500 jobs for the Guthrie area when

fully operational, paying upwards of \$17 an hour according to City Manager Glenn Hayes.

The decision of Excel-Jet to move their operations base to Guthrie could have the most significant impact on the city since the State Capital days Hayes said.

"This is easily the most significant economic development opportunity that has come

Please see **Excel**, page 3

## Excel

From page 1

Guthrie's way in the last 30 years," Hayes said. "We believe that the announcement of their intent to relocate here will spur interest from other related entities in the aviation industry. We've already had inquiries, and expect to have even more following this decision."

During the Development Authority's discussion of the resolution to draft an agreement to help the Colorado-based aircraft company secure the loan, Excel-Jet founder Bob Bornhofen expressed excitement about his company's pending relocation.

"There are a lot of potential advantages of being located in a small town," Bornhofen said. "This is really a nice community. You also have two very innovative companies onsite at your airport already with Spirit Wing and Zivko. There could potentially be

a lot of synergies there between the three companies."

Following the council's decision to support the move, Bornhofen said that several cities around the country have been working to secure the relocation of his company. According to him, his decision to move to Guthrie was ultimately based on the cooperative attitude he sensed from the people involved with his recruitment effort here.

"There was just no comparison between (City Manager) Glenn Hayes and (Economic Development Director) and Alba Weaver to the people we met with from other cities," Bornhofen said. "They were far more professional and responsive, and you could see early on that they had a goal, we had a goal, and we found a way to make it work. They are your biggest asset, in my opinion."

Hayes and Weaver had recently made two visits to Bornhofen's headquarters in Colorado Springs, and were accompanied most recently by Mayor Jon Gumerson and Calvin Burgess of Spirit Wing

Aviation.

Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission Director Victor Bird was equally excited about Excel-Jet's relocation following the meeting.

"This is a great opportunity for Guthrie and Oklahoma as a whole," Bird said. "This airplane is going to set the world on fire, because it's the perfect fit for its market niche in the aviation industry. This was really not a risk on Guthrie's part, it's a tremendous investment in their future."

Guthrie/Edmond Regional Airport Manager Ron Groves echoes Bird's sentiments.

"This is exactly why we established the Guthrie-Edmond Regional Airport", Groves said.

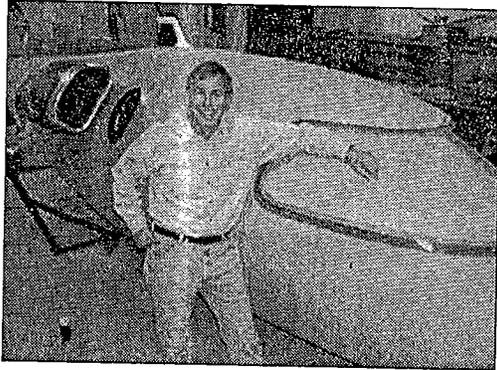
"This is a new piece of aviation. It is what aviation will come to be, and we will be a part of it."

"Glenn Hayes and Alba Weaver are to receive the full credit for this. They are responsible for it. Also, the support of the City of Edmond is great, for all of them to have the courage to partner in this it is tremendous," Groves added

# Excel-Jet facts at a glance

## Who they are:

Excel-Jet was founded in Colorado by Bob Bornhofen. Bornhofen previously successfully designed the Maverick TwinJet, a twin-engine personal jet that was



Excel-Jet founder Bob Bornhofen

designed and produced in only two years, an unusually fast development by aviation standards. Prior to founding his own aviation company, Bornhofen spent 37 years as an engineer involved in satellite design and operation for TRW and Hughes Aircraft, where he led projects for the Apollo Moon Landing Missions.

**The Airplane:** Excel's Sport-Jet is designed as a single-engine personal jet aircraft capable of carrying four passengers that will travel 600 miles in two hours. The aircraft is designed to travel at 25,000 feet, which allows the pilot to get above 95 percent of the weather, and makes the airplane much cheaper to insure. Its range and speed will rival twin-engine aircraft, with a lower fuel consumption rate and fewer certification requirements for the pilot.

## Their Business Plan:



An artist's depiction of the finished Sport-Jet in flight

investment for the design and production of the airplane has come from Bornhofen personally. The \$375,000 loan package that the City of Guthrie has agreed to explore would purchase the Williams FJ33-4A engine that will power the test aircraft. Once the engine is installed, the aircraft is expected to be certified by the FAA in as soon as 60 days, as the airframe has already been previously tested.

According to City Manager Glenn Hayes, the company's potential investors have said they would view the City's backing of the loan as a strong sign of the community's partnership with the company.

Once fully operational, the Guthrie assembly facility could employ 300-500 people.

**Why Guthrie?:** According to Bornhofen, the recruitment efforts of Hayes and Economic Development Director Alba Weaver exceeded the efforts of competing communities. Also, the presence of established aviation companies such as Spirit Wing and Zivko Aeronautics contributed to his decision, Bornhofen said.

The Guthrie/Edmond Regional Airport's recent designation as a Foreign Trade Zone, brought about through Weaver's efforts over the last two years, is also a likely contributing factor. Many of the parts which will go into the aircraft are produced in Poland and other overseas countries. The FTZ designation will allow those parts to be imported duty-free until the final product is assembled and sold.

While no specific competing locations were revealed, Bornhofen indicated that he was still receiving recruitment calls immediately prior to Tuesday night's City Council meeting.

Photos courtesy of Excel-Jet, Ltd.