

A WI-FI PTI? IT MIGHT HAPPEN ; THE TECHNOLOGY WOULD ALLOW PASSENGERS TO USE THE INTERNET WHILE THEY'RE IN THE AIRPORT TERMINAL.

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Piedmont Triad International Airport could soon become a hot spot.

A wireless hot spot, that is.

The airport authority is accepting bids to install a wireless, or Wi-Fi, network that will allow travelers to access the Internet when they're in PTI's terminal.

"We've had a number of passengers that have requested Wi-Fi," said Ted Johnson, the airport's executive director, adding that many business travelers have asked for the service. "We'd like to get it all over the terminal building. I just don't know what the cost will be."

Depending on the airport's existing Internet infrastructure, it could cost about \$200,000 to install a wireless network at PTI, experts said.

Companies have until the end of August to submit bids for the project.

Wi-Fi, which is short for wireless fidelity, enables computer users to access the Internet without wires. Instead, data is transmitted through short-range radio signals.

The Triad has numerous public wireless "hot spots:" The Green Bean coffee shop and Center City Park in downtown Greensboro, along Fourth Street in Winston-Salem and at various restaurants and gathering places.

Airports are logical candidates for such service. They attract large numbers of laptop-carrying business travelers, many of whom like to answer phone messages and e-mail while waiting for their flights.

"The places that we find people use it most often (are) certainly in the gate areas and in the food court kind of areas, anywhere that they sit and dwell for a while," said Dick Snyder, senior vice president of product marketing at **Concourse Communications** Group, based in Chicago.

Snyder said that 19 of the nation's 50 largest airports offer some kind of wireless Internet access to passengers and six others are taking bids for the service.

His company, which has wireless networking contracts with five other airports, is considering bidding on the PTI project, Snyder said.

In most cases, wireless networking companies sign revenue-sharing agreements with airports, much as other concessionaires do.

In those deals, the airport and the provider earn money whenever passengers use the wireless network. **Concourse Communications**, for example, typically charges people \$6.95 a day to use the Internet and shares that fee with its airports clients.

The airport and wireless provider also may share in the cost of installing the network.

"The most typical model that we've encountered is a revenue-sharing model between us and the airport authority," Snyder said. "There are variations on that theme. In some cases, the airport provides some of the so-called backbone equipment - the network equipment - to support this. The revenue share typically reflects who has sunk what kind of cost into (the network)."

Johnson said he's not sure how much PTI would be willing to pay to install a wireless network.

The seven-member airport authority would have to approve any contract.