

# THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF BUSINESS FLYING

A TRIP TO DECATUR, ALA.

BY AL CARRINO



**You can't get there from here?  
Yes you can... if you fly your  
own airplane!**

I've been a fan of flying since I was a little kid—and I'm going to be 60 in February. I grew up in Bensenville, Ill. just a mile away from O'Hare (KORD) and I would ride my bike down to Runway 14R all the time to watch the DC-3s, Electras and DC-6s.

I started training for my private pilot certificate in 1980, and flew about 50 hours. Then my first son was born—this may sound familiar to many of you?—and about 10 years later, for my 40th birthday, I completed my training with American Flyers. It took me six months. That was in 1992.

On my 41st birthday, I took my two sons for their first private airplane ride. And I flew for a bit as a private pilot; then I started a company. I had to take another break from flying in 1997, but as the company began to grow, it allowed me to resume flying again. From my perspective, you either have to have a lot of money, or a business, in order to be able to fly regularly. I have a business.

### THE CHALLENGE

My company manufactures environmental safety monitors for protecting people in the workplace. I have a customer

in Decatur, Ala. that was having problems with a monitoring application and needed to see me quickly.

Using the airlines, the closest airport is Huntsville (KHSV) and an American Airlines round trip ticket price was \$985, with only two scheduled flights per day. With such a limited flight schedule, the trip now required an overnight hotel stay... add another \$150. It also meant a rental car (\$95 per day) plus a few meals and the loss of my time during the two-day commute, all just to have a four-hour meeting with my customer.

Due to the nature of my monitoring systems and the current TSA rules (the sensor cells on the gas detectors have liquid in them), I am no longer permitted to carry any of my equipment, tools and supplies on a commercial aircraft—even in checked baggage. So add another \$200 for shipping charges, not to mention the time and trouble to ship, meet the package at its destination, do business, and ship everything back... it's just hard to do.

I asked myself, "What's wrong with this picture?"

Fortunately I am a private pilot. I am also working on my instrument rating and had a need to complete my 300-miler as part of the training to obtain my IFR ticket. So I grabbed my instructor, Al Waterloo, and asked if he would accompany me on this mission to kill the proverbial