



CONTACT: Kimberley Baker
Director, Marketing/Media
(713) 844-3638 – Office
kbaker@houston.org

NEWS RELEASE

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GHP, HOUSTON AIRPORTS LEAD DELEGATION TO TURKEY TALKS TO EXPAND TRADE TIES, AIRLINE SERVICE

HOUSTON – The Greater Houston Partnership and the Houston Airport System are leading a delegation of Houston business leaders, airport officials and the Texas Turkish American Chamber of Commerce (TTACC) to Turkey, March 5-11, to discuss expanding trade and air service opportunities. The visit also aims to further plans for a new direct air route between Houston and Istanbul.

The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), the largest and primary business organization in Turkey, is connecting the Houston group with high level government officials and corporate executives for the mission.

“GHP is pleased to team with Houston Airports in attracting new passenger and cargo business between our region and one of the world’s emerging economic powers - Turkey,” said GHP President & CEO Jeff Moseley. “Houston and Turkey are important allies with common links in the energy sector. The mission is an excellent opportunity to strengthen Houston’s position as a gateway to global markets.”

The Turkey trip will include business-to-business meetings with export organizations, companies and Turkish Airlines; media interviews with local and national press; and business presentations to prospective investors. Talks will focus on a number of sectors for trade developments including energy, information technology, construction/infrastructure and textiles.

“Our primary goals for this mission are to secure an announcement for a direct flight between Houston - the U.S.’ fourth largest city, and Turkey, the world’s 16th largest economy,” said Houston Airport System Director Mario C. Diaz. “Turkish Airlines has already expressed both privately and publicly that it is rapidly expanding its air route development in the U.S. with Houston being a priority destination.”

Currently, Turkish Airlines flies direct to New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. It begins service to Los Angeles this month. Houston will be the airlines’ first Texas stop.

(MORE)

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1200 SMITH, SUITE 700, HOUSTON, TX 77002 | PHONE: 713-844-3600 | FAX: 713-844-0200
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“For Houston, Turkey is three hours flying time to 50 different countries; three quarters of the world’s oil and gas resources; and about three billion people, which makes the country a crucial hub for many multinational corporations,” said TTACC President Celil Yaka.

Turkey shares extensive business and cultural connections with the Houston region. More than 325 Houston companies report business or trade ties with the country.

“Turkey is an important business and financial leader in Europe and the Middle East,” said TUSKON President Rizanur Meral. “The country has experienced an average growth of six percent over the last decade. In the last year, high level government officials and business executives have visited Houston five different times to explore trade and investment opportunities. It makes sense that Turkey would continue this important dialogue with a dynamic and diverse region like Houston.”

Uniworld Business reports 134 firms – either headquarter or branch locales – in the Houston region operate 356 subsidiary locations in Turkey. Last year, total trade between Houston and Turkey jumped 17.4 percent, from \$1.6 billion to \$1.9 billion. The Houston/Galveston Custom District ranks as Turkey’s second largest U.S. gateway for international trade and also is America’s second largest international seaborne trade partner.

“Houston has enjoyed a sister-city relationship with Istanbul since 1986, and we applaud any efforts that strengthen both cultural and business connections,” Moseley said. “Turkey is an important energy importer located in a strategic area that is a magnet for investment. The Houston region looks forward to being a part of the projected \$150 billion in energy investments that country is expected to invest in the next five to 10 years.”

The Greater Houston Partnership is the primary business advocate for the 10-county Houston region and is dedicated to building regional economic prosperity. Through its award-winning lead generation and marketing program *Opportunity Houston*, GHP will help grow jobs, increase capital investment and expand foreign trade for the region by the end of 2015.

Visit the Greater Houston Partnership on the World Wide Web at houston.org.

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The Greater Houston Partnership is the primary advocate of the Houston’s business community and is dedicated to building regional economic prosperity. It represents 10 counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto and Waller.

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