

Air Service Development News



New all-jet air service to start in Riverton July 1

The Wyoming Aeronautics Commission has approved an air service agreement that could serve as a model for future service to Wyoming communities facing a loss of flights due to changes in federal regulations.

The agreement approved May 17 expands current service by Denver Air Connection between Sheridan and Denver to include Riverton beginning July 1.

The Sheridan-Johnson (County) Critical Air Service Team, Fremont (County) Air Service Team and WYDOT Aeronautics Division negotiated the agreement with Key Lime Air, a Colorado corporation doing business as Denver Air Connection.

The agreement provides \$1.2 million in assistance from the state's Air Service Enhancement Program for the flights serving each of the communities, and Sheridan and Riverton will each provide \$795,000. The agreement extends through June 30, 2017.

The hope is demand will grow until both communities can support direct daily flights to Denver.



A Denver Air Connections Dornier 328JET awaits boarding in Sheridan.

Sheridan lost air service in April 2015 as a result of a pilot shortage caused by the increase in flying experience required by the Federal Aviation Administration beginning in 2013 for co-pilots on flights carrying 10 or more passengers.

The change forced Great Lakes Airlines to drop more than half of its Wyoming flights, and reduce the number of passengers on the remaining flights from 19 to nine in order to continue to fly with co-pilots who don't have the flying hours required by the regulation.

As a result, regardless of demand, far fewer people are able to fly in and out of Wyoming's airports, while the cost of operating the remaining flights is unchanged. The drop in passenger numbers left airports below the minimum required for federal air service subsidies.

Senate FAA reauthorization bill aims to improve small community air service

The U.S. Senate passed its version of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Bill on April 19. The bill now goes to the U.S. House for consideration.

Final passage of the proposed legislation would address small community concerns on airport security, passenger reliability, and would also aid in the restoration of funding and services vital to Wyoming's economy.

The bill secures air transport for Wyoming communities by reauthorizing the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program and increasing funding to the Small Community Air Service Development Program from \$5 million to \$10 million.

The bill also addresses the effects declining enplanements have had on smaller airports by restoring \$1 million in airport improvement (AIP) entitlement funding airports rely on for capital improvement projects.

Outside of funding improvements, the bill also directs the USDOT to create a working group geared specifically towards improving air service to small communities and finding new solutions. Additionally, the bill would require the Transportation Safety Administration to restore security screening services at airports that have lost commercial air service but have a commitment from an airline to return.

This headway was made through the efforts of WYDOT, Wyoming's congressional delegation, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and other states affected by substandard air service to their smaller communities.

Consumer protection initiatives have also been included, allowing refunds for baggage fees when items are delayed more than six hours or are lost or stolen, and improving how delay information is relayed to the public.

Jackson Hole Airport has record traffic for first quarter of 2016

Airport continues to set traffic records

The Jackson Hole airport recently recorded its best first quarter of traffic ever as tourism continues to burgeon in the region.

Jackson Hole Air Improvement Resources partnered with WYDOT to help support continued service on United Airlines to the New York City and Washington, D.C. areas.

Over the course of the winter, 13 nonstop destinations were served from the airport resulting in a 13 percent increase in traffic over 2015.



A Look Back

United Airlines maintenance personnel work on aircraft in at the Cheyenne overhaul base. Cheyenne served as a maintenance base from the early 1930's until 1947. Photo courtesy of United Airlines.

