

Airport awarded new grant

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BULLHEAD CITY — The Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport got some good news Thursday. What it does with it going forward could be even better news for residents of the Tri-state.

On Thursday, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that the local airport was the recipient of a \$750,000 grant that the Mohave County Airport Authority plans to use in its continuing effort to secure commercial air service.

“The Mohave County Airport Authority is extremely pleased and appreciative to receive this Small Community Air Service grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation,” said John Hastings, president of the authority. “We want to extend our gratitude and appreciation to everyone who supported our effort and assistance in obtaining this award.”

Laughlin/Bullhead International was one of nine airports to receive a share of \$5.15 million in grants for local air service developments.

Others included Inyokern, Calif. (\$450,000); Stockton, Calif. (\$650,000); Hailey, Idaho (\$500,000); Billings, Mont. (\$750,000); Missoula, Mont. (\$600,000); Santa Fe, N.M. (\$500,000); Amarillo, Texas (\$750,000) and Port Angeles, Wash. (\$200,000).

“Robust, dependable air service plays an important role in every community’s ability to connect to the national and global economies,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “SCASDP has a tremendous record of making a lasting impact, and I know these communities will be our next set of success stories.”

Competitive applications demonstrate community and air carrier support, along with investment from other sources such as public-private partnerships. This year’s awardees met all of those criteria, committing more than \$3 million in local financial resources in addition to other in-kind contributions. The Mohave County Airport Authority submitted a proposal to the Department of Transportation which included a revenue guarantee and a marketing component that matched federal funds with a local share. Authority representatives have met and negotiated with a number of airlines in recent years. Local officials have listed two scenarios as current priorities: flights to and from Denver International Airport or flights to and from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

According to information from the Airport Authority, each of those scenarios would provide connectivity to and from much of the country as well as much of the world. Both year-round and seasonal service arrangements have been explored.

Flights would benefit both leisure and business travelers, most of whom now use McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, 100 miles away.

“Now the really hard part begins, negotiating with an airline to start service to our community,” said Jeremy Keating, director of Laughlin/Bullhead International. “This really is fantastic news, because we do have interest from a couple of air carriers that want to discuss options with us.”

Airport officials have declined to identify those carriers because of the ongoing nature of the negotiations.

Laughlin/Bullhead International is one of the busiest non-metropolitan passenger airports in the region. Although traditional scheduled passenger service ended 14 years ago, daily commercial service to more than 130 cities in the U.S. and Canada is provided by Sun Country Airlines and Elite Airways, scheduled charter flights for the Riverside Resort and Harrah’s Laughlin.

Since the program’s inception, SCASDP awards have helped almost 400 communities develop aviation projects tailored to local needs.