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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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POCATELLO AIRPORT RECEIVES AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT GRANT
Upgrade to Jet Service Planned

Pocatello Regional Airport has been awarded a federal grant to facilitate replacing current turboprop service with larger jet aircraft. The Department of Transportation announced the award of the $500,000 Small Community Air Service Development (SCASD) grant earlier this week. The grant amount, plus an additional $100,000 in local dollars and in-kind services, will be used as a revenue guarantee during the start-up and for marketing the upgraded service.

"We're very pleased to be awarded this grant," said Airport Manager David Allen, adding, "The upgrade would have several effects. First, it would increase capacity – the daily number of seats that are available. Second, it would increase the number of lower-cost fares available on each flight. And lastly, it would attract that segment of the market that prefers jet aircraft." Allen says the upgrade could have a dramatic effect on passenger numbers. Historic data shows that the capacity the jets would provide could increase our net loads by 80%.

SkyWest Airlines, operating as the Delta Connection for Delta Airlines, is currently the only carrier serving the airport. SkyWest provides daily service between Pocatello and Salt Lake City International, a major Delta Airlines hub, with 30-seat Embraer 120 turboprop aircraft. The E-120 aircraft in the SkyWest inventory are nearing the end of their lifecycle and there are no new 30-seat aircraft to replace them. In September, SkyWest dropped one daily flight from Pocatello and most other locations served by the E-120 aircraft because they retired the first group of aircraft when the lease expired. This was done even though Pocatello Regional Airport had sustained a 4% increase in year-to-date passenger numbers over last year.

Making the change to 50-seat regional jets now will establish the equipment in the Southeast Idaho market. The grant will greatly reduce the risk to the carrier – a risk that they otherwise probably wouldn't take. The grant also provides marketing to inform the public and attract the additional passengers needed.

The upgrade is not automatic. Both Delta and SkyWest have indicated a willingness to work with the airport on the upgrade. In fact, their support was probably instrumental in obtaining the grant award, but the exact terms and conditions must be negotiated, which is the next step for airport staff.

Allen says part of the marketing and promotional campaign will be to gain community support and enlarge the existing base of loyal passengers. "It's like Bengal football (if you'll allow me that much leeway). When the team makes winning changes, it increases the fan base, and the increased fan base promotes more winning changes. Upgrading to jet service is the winning change we can add to our strengths. Strengths such as fast, friendly and convenient service, amenities such as free parking, coffee and wi-fi, and one-stop baggage check-in."

And one advantage Allen always loves to hear: "The passengers are so happy to drive home in minutes instead of hours after a full day of air travel."

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