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Airport will survey public

Whether they've flown locally or not, travelers' opinions are wanted

September 12, 2013

By EMILIE NELSON-JENSON, ejenson@messengernews.net , Messenger News

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As the Fort Dodge Regional Airport prepares to start the bidding process for commercial air service in 2014, it is seeking the public's help in continuing to provide essential air service out of Fort Dodge.

To that end, the Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance and Fort Dodge Regional Airport are conducting a survey on airport usage for business and personal travel. Travelers, whether they have used the local airport or not, are encouraged to participate.

"Our current contract with Great Lakes Airlines will expire on May 31, 2014," said Rhonda Chambers, director of aviation at the Fort Dodge Regional Airport. "The DOT will start bidding out for airlines this fall and the purpose of the survey is to gather the data needed that will help us to keep or attract a good airline to Fort Dodge."

The 11-question survey seeks answers such as the number of times travelers use the local airport, why they might select another airport, top destinations and how travelers book their tickets.

"This data is important for airlines to see so they know where our passengers are traveling," said Chambers. "If they know where they have a need, they know they will capture revenue where they locate."

Kelly Halsted, Growth Alliance economic development director, said the airport's services are essential for continued growth in Fort Dodge.

"It's good for business attraction and retention," said Halsted. "Having airline service lets sales people fly in and serves as a way for them to be able to effectively meet with businesses."

Chambers said it is also crucial to Iowa Central Community College students.

"Air service is critical to Iowa Central," she said. "They are attracting more out-of-state students who are flying home for breaks."

Halsted said it is also important to individuals who may relocate to Fort Dodge to take jobs at new businesses such as Cargill or CJ Bioamerica.

"The more we draw companies and people that are not from around here, they will need that connection," said Halsted. "Both business and personal use of the airlines is important to our work force. The development going on in Fort Dodge should be a big motivator for

Fort Dodge, IA



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airlines."

Chambers said a U.S. Department of Transportation survey revealed that when looking for a community in which to locate, access to air service is often a major factor.

"When asked the top 10 reasons for selecting a town, the No. 3 reason was proximity to an airport with commercial service and No. 6 was access to an airport with general aviation for private planes," said Chambers.

The local surveys can be accessed online by following the link on the Fort Dodge Regional Airport website at FortDodgeIowa.org/Airport or at www.surveymonkey.com/s/travelforbusiness, and the individual survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/airport_survey or by emailing fdairport@fortdodgeiowa.org.

"The more people who complete the survey, the more data we will be able to provide to the airlines," said Chambers.

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