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Airlines invited to compete for subsidized routes at Sioux City airport

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November 02, 2013 7:00 pm • DAVE DREESZEN ddreeszen@siouxcityjournal.com (1) Comments

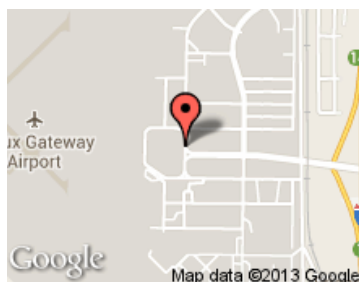
SIoux CITY | The U.S. Department of Transportation Friday invited other airlines to compete with American Airlines for subsidized routes at Sioux Gateway Airport.

The DOT currently contracts with American, the only carrier at the Sioux City airport, to fly at least 13 flights per week to and from O'Hare International Airport.

In December 2011, through a similar competitive process, the Fort Worth, Texas-based airline was awarded a two-year, \$3.02 million Essential Air Service contract. A holdover from the bygone era of regulated air travel, the EAS program guarantees service to rural areas and smaller airports.

American, which launched service on April 3, 2012, and any other airline has until Dec. 2 to submit proposals to serve Sioux Gateway for two more years, beginning May 1, according to an order the DOT posted on its website Friday.

American, which flies 50-seat regional jets at Sioux Gateway, has not yet said whether it intends to seek another EAS grant, keep operating without a subsidy, or



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US DOT order for Sioux Gateway EAS service, 2013



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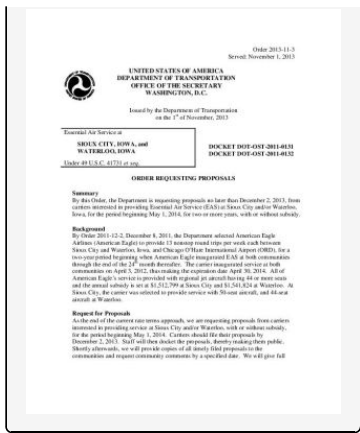
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withdraw from the airport entirely.

The new DOT order gives prospective carriers the option of packaging EAS proposals for Sioux Gateway and the Waterloo, Iowa, airport, which American also currently serves.

Carriers bidding for the Sioux Gateway flights must offer at least as many flights as American's existing schedule, to Chicago O'Hare or another "suitable" hub, according to the DOT document.

At Sioux Gateway, American replaced Delta Air Lines, which had flown daily connecting flights to its hub at Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Delta offered to retain service to the Twin Cities through a regional partner, SkyWest Airlines, which asked for a two-year \$2.42 million EAS subsidy.

With Chicago topping the list of destinations for leisure and business travelers, the Sioux City Council and Sioux Gateway Board of Trustees both endorsed American's bid. The support played a key role in the DOT's selection of American.

The public will be invited to weigh in on the next round of EAS proposals after they are finalized on Dec. 2.

Sioux Gateway Director Curt Miller said the DOT sent out the Request for Proposals earlier than local officials originally anticipated.

"We thought we'd see this around the first of December, so they're a little ahead of schedule," Miller said Friday.

If an airline other than American is selected, the DOT would require the incumbent to keep operating at Sioux Gateway until the transition occurs to prevent a disruption in service.

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Essential Air Service Timeline

July 16, 2011: Delta Air Lines notifies U.S. Department of Transportation it will drop money-losing connecting routes between Sioux Gateway Airport and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Nov. 17, 2011: Sioux Gateway Airport Board of Trustees endorse American's Essential Air Service proposal for two daily flights to and from Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

Dec. 8, 2011: DOT awards American two-year contract that entitles the airline to \$1.51 million per year to subsidize the routes.

April 3, 2012: American Eagle, a regional carrier, launches service in Sioux City. Delta, which offered a competing EAS proposal, leaves the market.

Nov. 1, 2013: DOT invites American and other carriers to submit proposals by Dec. 2 to serve Sioux Gateway for two more years.

Related Links

- [Sioux Gateway Airport website](#)

Online

Visit siouxcityjournal.com to view the U.S. Department of Transportation order requesting Essential Air Service proposals for Sioux Gateway Airport.

Tags Sioux Gateway Airport, Aviation, Chicago, Airline, American Airlines, Iowa, Us Airways, O Hare International Airport, Delta Air Lines, Essential Air Service, U.s. Department Of Transportation, Bill Mosley, Matt Miller, Dave Bernstein, American Eagle, Dallas, Department Of Justice

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