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
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Airport hits 10,000 passengers

Milestone entitles site to federal funds

November 29, 2011

By BILL SHEA, Messenger staff writer , Messenger News

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A Thor man was greeted with cheers and a shower of confetti when he checked in for an early morning flight out of Fort Dodge Regional Airport on Monday.

Rick Wachowiak received that surprising and unusual reception because he was the 10,000th person to board a plane at the airport this year.

"We are excited to reach the goal of 10,000 passengers and wish to express our sincere gratitude to all who choose to fly Fort Dodge," said Rhonda Chambers, the airport's director of aviation.

She presented Wachowiak with a \$200 voucher to help pay for his next flight out of Fort Dodge and a certificate good for \$100 for a car rental from Hertz.

Having 10,000 boardings is more than just an interesting milestone for an airport. According to Chambers, that level of activity earns the airport at least \$1 million from the federal government to be used for improvement projects.

"We will have the money without question," she said.

Federal money that's been awarded to the airport in the last few years has been considered discretionary funding, which means there was no guarantee it would go to Fort Dodge. As a result of reaching the 10,000th boarding, the facility is now classified as a primary airport and is entitled to get federal dollars automatically, Chambers said.

Fort Dodge Regional Airport last qualified as a primary airport in 2000. That year, there were 11,644 boardings.

The airport was on track to qualify again the next year, before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks curtailed air travel, according to Chambers. She said the airport finished that year with 9,722 boardings.

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