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Executive director Don Smithey to retire from airport

BY [KYLE OPPENHUIZEN](#), Staff Writer

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Don Smithey, executive director of the Des Moines International Airport, announced today that he will retire from the airport effective Feb. 14.

Smithey, the former director at Omaha's Eppley Airfield, came out of retirement to take the job in Des Moines four years ago.

"I've accomplished the goals that I set forth and said I would do," Smithey said.

Smithey, 73, is largely credited with helping the airport land service from Southwest Airlines. Under his watch, airfares have gotten more competitive, and the airport has [set record passenger numbers](#) the last two years. He also oversaw a change in the airport's governing structure from an airport board under Des Moines City Council jurisdiction, to a five-person airport authority.

His final order will be helping present information on a strategic plan prepared by consultant LeighFisher Inc. [Smithey has said](#) that the airport's current strategic plan, developed in 2007, is out of date. The new plan could lay out strategies for building a new terminal.

When Smithey retired from Omaha in 2009 and moved to West Des Moines, [officials convinced him](#) to come out of retirement to help the Des Moines airport, which was struggling with high airfares and declining passenger numbers.

Now, Smithey says he needs to learn how to relax. Among his first order of business in retirement will be visiting his daughters in Santa Monica and Houston, and maybe traveling to Europe with his wife.

"I have no regrets about anything I've done, and I'm very proud of the record that the airport's been able to maintain," he said. "It's not about me. It's about the great people who are on our board and also the tremendous staff I've had the opportunity to work with. So when I leave, it won't miss a beat."



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According to BTS stats from 3rd QTR 2010, the fares in DSM were already low. Some 200 people heard Executive VP Ron Riecks (Southwest) say, "We are here because we bought AirTran Airways. AirTran proved this market could support a low fare carrier." No mention of Smithey. He's a fraud. Others work

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