

DOT selects American Airlines over Delta for Waterloo



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WATERLOO, Iowa --- Waterloo is switching its daily commercial airline connection from Minneapolis to Chicago, according to a report from the office of U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded American Airlines the Essential Air Service contract that will provide twice-daily departures and arrivals between Waterloo Regional Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport, according to a dispatch from Harkin, D-Iowa.

Harkin is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which played a role in permitting both Waterloo and Sioux City to join the EAS program.

Harkin said Thursday that both Waterloo and Sioux City will switch to American's American Eagle flights to O'Hare, changing from regular flights between those cities and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

"Connecting Sioux City and Waterloo air service through O'Hare will improve the flying options for travelers, while, at the same time, create and preserve jobs in both areas," Harkin said in a news



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release. "Better service is also important for economic development and in attracting new businesses."

Waterloo city officials and the Cedar Valley business community endorsed the change from Delta to American.

"If American has been awarded the contract, we appreciate what the city of Waterloo and the DOT took into account regarding the strong preference stated by the business community for the connection to Chicago," said Steve Dust, chief executive officer of the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber.

"We and the businesses that stated that believe we're going to bring stronger traffic there that will prove helpful to our area as airlines build strategies for serving the entire country and international markets and not just the Midwest," he said.

No details were given on when the change will take place.

Waterloo Mayor Buck Clark stressed that the city had not received official notification from the DOT, American or Delta.

But, he said he assumed confirmation would be forthcoming, as would details regarding the transition.

"It's kind of what we expected, and we're excited to move forward," Clark said. "Not that Delta hasn't done a good job, but we're excited American is going to give a whole new dimension to Waterloo."

Obviously, it doesn't come as a surprise. It's what we thought would happen. We are optimistic that

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American will be a very good partner with Waterloo and will grow this market," he added.

Harkin spokeswoman Kate Cyrul said there was no information yet on when the change would occur, but she did say that Waterloo's EAS subsidy will be \$1,541,824 annually.

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