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# North Iowa leaders will lobby Congress for rural airport aid



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By JOHN SKIPPER john.skipper@globegazette.com | Posted: Friday, February 4, 2011 12:00 pm | (13) Comments

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By JOHN SKIPPER

john.skipper@globegazette.com

MASON CITY — When Mason City Municipal Airport Manager Pam Osgood goes to Washington next week, she will lobby aggressively for Congress to continue subsidies for rural airports.

A proposed amendment to a Senate bill would eliminate Essential Air Service funding money to help commercial airlines like Delta service small airports such as Mason City's.

Without the funding, major airlines could stop service to smaller airports.

Osgood, City Administrator Brent Trout and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Robin Anderson will meet with Federal Aviation Administration officials next week when Clear Lake and Mason City officials make their annual lobbying trip to Washington.

In the Senate, U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has proposed an amendment to an FAA appropriations bill that would eliminate Essential Air Service funding as a way of cutting government expenses.

Osgood said Friday, "It truly frustrates me that Sen. McCain would lead this effort. We all know how important and vital air service is to our community and the surrounding regions.

"I realize the need to downsize the federal government but not on the backs of rural America which needs access to the air transportation system."

Osgood said she has contacted the offices of Iowa's two senators, Tom Harkin and Charles Grassley, to voice her opposition.

"Believe me, the EAS program is my main topic to discuss with our senators and their aides in Washington," she said.

U.S. Rep. Tom Latham, R-Ames, who will also be visited by the North Iowa group, said Friday he doubted whether the McCain amendment will have much traction

"At this point, I would be very surprised if the amendment passed. Every senator has small airports in their states so they know the impact," said Latham.

Other topics on the North Iowa priority list in Washington:

- Transmission of renewable fuels.
- Assistance from congressional offices on pending applications.
- Advocacy of establishment of a National Flood Center at the University of Iowa.

Representatives of the Mason City and Clear Lake chambers and city governments, the North Iowa Corridor EDC and airport personnel will be part of the North Iowa contingent in Washington.

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The group leaves Tuesday and returns Friday.

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