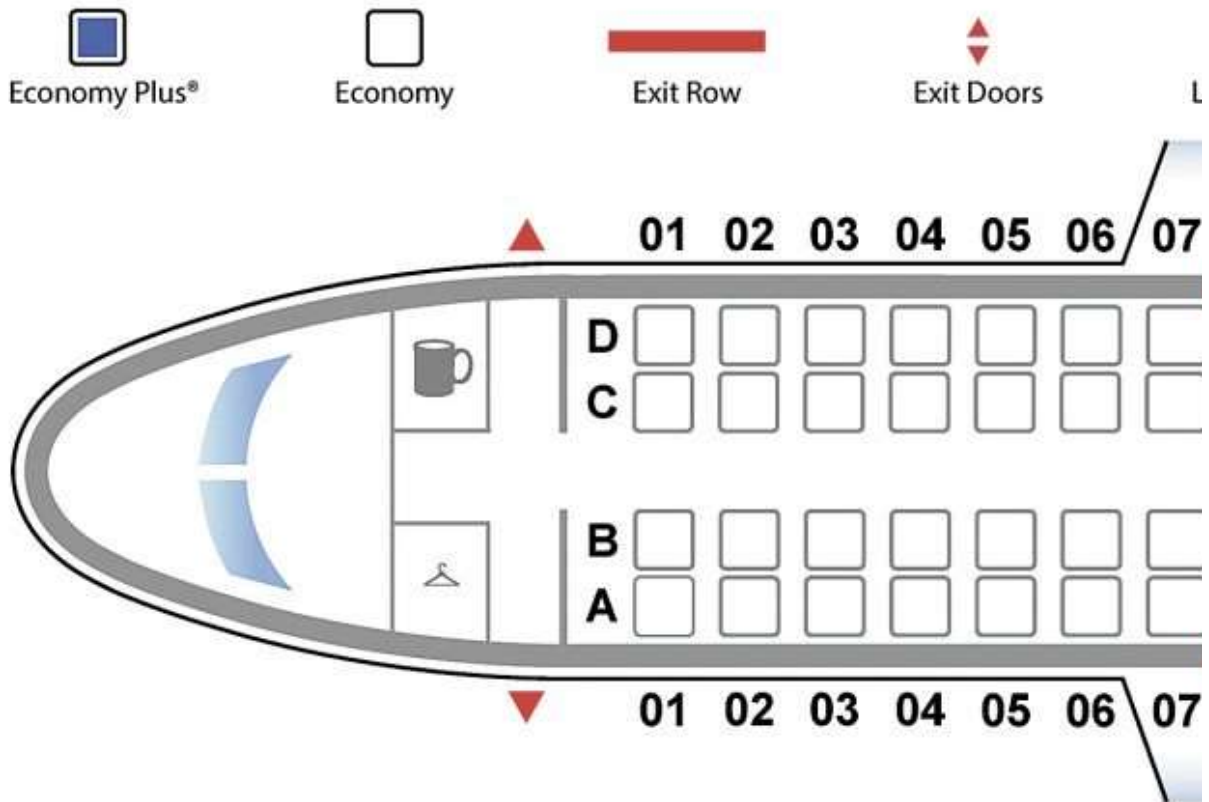


THE Messenger

Jet service to return to Fort Dodge

United Express to serve regional airport



-Submitted photo

This is a look at the interior of the 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 jets that will begin flying to and from Fort Dodge Regional Airport on March 1.

Passenger jets will return to Fort Dodge Regional Airport next year.

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United Express will begin flying 50-seat jets from Fort Dodge to Chicago O'Hare International Airport in Illinois starting March 1, Rhonda Chambers, the airport's director of aviation, announced Tuesday.

A roughly \$3 million annual subsidy from the federal Essential Air Service program will make the service possible.

The last time jets served the local airport was in late 2011 and early 2012, during the last months of Delta Air Lines' presence in the community. That was also the last time that Fort Dodge passengers could make seamless connections to other flights at a larger airport.

"It's exciting," Chambers said.



-Submitted photo

Bombardier CRJ-200 jets like the one shown here will become a regular sight at the Fort Dodge Regional Airport. United Express will begin flying those jets between Fort Dodge and Chicago O'Hare International Airport in Illinois beginning March 1.

She said that at Chicago O'Hare, Fort Dodge passengers will be able to
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The jet service will be valuable to local businesses as well as leisure travelers, she added.

“They have connections worldwide,” she said. “With this service, you can obviously get there from here.”

United Express will replace Air Choice One, which has served Fort Dodge since 2015.

Air Choice One serves Fort Dodge with the assistance of an Essential Air Service subsidy.

That airline’s contract with the U.S. Department of Transportation ends Feb. 28, 2021. In anticipation of that, the department solicited proposals from airlines interested in serving Fort Dodge. Four proposals were received. In October, the Fort Dodge Regional Airport Commission endorsed the proposal from United Express.

The department recently awarded the contract to United Express, which is operated by SkyWest Airlines Inc.

The airline will receive an annual subsidy of \$3,071,656 to serve Fort Dodge.

The Essential Air Service program, which will provide that money, was created to ensure that airlines continue to serve smaller communities.

The new contract with United Express goes into effect March 1, 2021, and ends Feb. 29, 2024.

United Express will serve Fort Dodge with 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 jets.

The airline will provide 12 roundtrips to Chicago every week. Although the schedule has not been finalized, Chambers said it seems likely that there will be two roundtrips on weekdays and one a day on Saturdays and Sundays.

Air Choice One, which has turbo prop planes that seat eight or nine people, will continue to serve Fort Dodge until Feb. 28, 2021. However, it will drop its weekday flight to Chicago on Jan. 1, 2021. It will continue to provide service to Lambert St. Louis International Airport in Missouri and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in Minnesota.

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