

Airport report

National Air Service Recognition

By Iftikhar Ahmad
Director of Aviation

Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport continues to set records and receive national recognition for air service in the world of aviation. Airline Weekly, a subscriber-supported publication reporting on commercial passenger aviation worldwide, recognized our Airport for the biggest increase in passenger volume in 2013 in the entire United States. This distinction is based on industry figures just released. Last year, Armstrong International had approximately 9.2 million passengers pass through the doors, up 7.1 percent from 2012. There were only three other major cities – two in Texas (Houston and Austin) and one in California (San Jose) that ranked close with about 6 percent growth.

Our achievement in passenger growth was also recognized by *anna.aero*, an online industry publication dedicated to outstanding airline network planning and genuine number crunching. They recognized us as the fastest growing airport in the category of between 5 and 10 million passengers. For this honor, we were awarded their prestigious Annie Award, an award given for actual data collected and reviewed as opposed to an award based on a popular vote. Keeping costs down and passenger loads high for our airline partners is a must for our market to continue to grow with new airlines and destinations as well as to maintain the service we presently have. I think it is very important for our community to know and understand that airports cannot create a demand for air service. It is the community that creates demand. We continue to scan Department of Transportation data to assess gaps in air service when demand is either there or projected. The increase in passenger volume to date can be attributed to both demand and strategic planning focused on cost-cutting efforts that were put in place as long ago as 2010 by the Airport. For example, the lowering of the Cost Per Enplanement (CPE) that was scheduled to be as high as \$16.41 this year is now a low \$8.30 thanks to thoughtful planning. As we move through this year, our numbers for the first quarter are greater than the same time period last year, but on a cautionary note there is no guarantee this trend will continue. However, the New Orleans region is going through a major renaissance. Our conventions are returning, the number of restaurants in our area has doubled since 2005 and the hotels are extremely busy. Looking ahead as best we can, things for the most

part look good. I believe that the new \$650 million North Terminal to be constructed by 2018 will help us bring more flights to our region. This new building will be cheaper to operate which translates into more savings to be passed on to our airline partners. As well, the new terminal with its new retail space will increase non-airline revenue and the access to all concourses post security should allow for additional connecting flights. Until it is completed, our team will continue to ask our airline partners to provide even more service to new destinations based on our track record of decreasing costs and a commitment to continue to do it.

Since our last report, I have more good news to share regarding air service. Spirit Airlines, one of our low cost carriers that entered our market with daily service to Dallas, is adding new nonstop service in August to Houston and Ft. Lauderdale. Their price to Houston for our market is a fare far less than the cost to drive there which should make it a very popular flight. For those wishing to travel from New Orleans with timely connections to Central America, Spirit is setting their arrival schedule in Ft. Lauderdale to correspond with their Central America departures from the Florida airport. Other options for nonstop international travel from our Airport include seasonal service with vacationexpress to Cancun, Mexico and Montego Bay, Jamaica (the third international destination announced in the past three years) as well as yearly daily flights to Toronto, Canada aboard Air Canada. Beginning this month with the new arrival of Alaska Airlines and their direct flight to Seattle, our Airport will be served by 12 airlines to 42 non-stop destinations. All of the various airlines' contact information can be found on our award winning website, www.flymsy.com along with the listing of destinations from our Airport, arriving and departing flight updates and general flight information. It is a trip planning resource I think you will find useful. ✈



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