



Airlines respond to Mardi Gras and HIMSS Conference February Flights Increased to Accommodate Groups

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 27, 2007, New Orleans – Mardi Gras and the demand brought on by a large convention result in increased air service at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

Mardi Gras has always created a surge in travel. This year, the airlines responded to that surge by increasing flights to accommodate the crowds coming to New Orleans to celebrate and the departure of locals who spent the Mardi Gras holidays elsewhere.

Continental Airlines has been leading the return of air service to New Orleans, by increasing flights during peak periods. For the entire Mardi Gras holiday, Continental added 64 flights over a 12 day period to their normal schedule. This change resulted in an additional 7,633 seats coming into the market for that period. Delta and Southwest each responded to New Orleans families looking for that Mardi Gras holiday get away in Orlando. Delta upgraded its flights to Orlando, while Southwest added 4 roundtrip flights to Orlando with a total increase of 1096 seats.

Reports from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) on the total number of passengers who departed from Armstrong International Airport for the 7 day period beginning the Friday before Mardi Gras until the Thursday after Mardi Gras, provided the first passenger counts. According to TSA numbers, in the seven day period, 92,000 passengers departed from Armstrong in 2007, up from the 67,000 who departed over the same period in 2006 but down from the Pre-Katrina total of 149,000. The peak travel day over the holiday period was the Wednesday after Mardi Gras all three years with 13,900 departing this year an increase from the 10,500 that departed in 2006 but down from the 24,000 that was the peak prior to Hurricane Katrina.

Mayor C. Ray Nagin noted in his post-Mardi Gras press conference that the number of flights were up this year at Armstrong International. This along with the availability of 31,000 hotel rooms assisted the return of "normal" levels of Mardi Gras visitors.

The airlines also increased air service for the Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Conference that is meeting in the City this week. American, Continental and Delta all increased the service into New Orleans to help accommodate the convention and its 24,000 attendees. American added 280 seats to the market with extra flights and Delta added 105 seats by increasing aircraft size. Continental again was the leader in responding to demand for seats into the City. Continental added 2,352 seats into the City on 27

additional flights. All of these additions are a direct result of the joint efforts by the Airport Staff, hospitality leaders and local officials to show the Airlines the need for increased capacity.

“Because of the strong working relationship we enjoy with the Airport and the Convention and Visitors Bureau, we have been successful in adding more flights to meet the demand created by special events being held in New Orleans,” said Greg Hart, Continental Airlines staff vice president scheduling. “We will continue to work closely with the Airport and Convention and Visitors Bureau to add more service for other upcoming events this spring.”

Sean Hunter, Interim Director of Aviation stated, “We are pleased with the response that we have gotten from all of airlines as we work to rebuild the region. During this time period when our core flight schedule is below pre-Katrina levels, it’s more crucial than ever to be flexible in finding ways to accommodate peak demand periods. We sincerely appreciate the way the airlines have stepped up to the plate.”

Currently, Armstrong International has service to 32 destinations on 108 daily flight departures with 13,465 seats. This number will increase to 38 destinations on 119 flights with 13,706 seats when ExpressJet begins service to New Orleans.

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