

For Immediate Release

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GFK Receives \$1 Million SCASDP Grant to Expand Air Service Offerings

The funds come one year after the Mayor and EDC gathered the business community to address shrinking air service options for the Mayor's Air Service Expansion Committee.

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – Grand Forks International Airport (GFK) has received \$1 million from the Small Community Air Service Development Program grant (SCASDP). GFK was informed of the award from the United States Department of Transportation on Thursday, October 31st. The award comes after a year-long effort that started in October 2023, with the leadership of the City of Grand Forks Mayor Brandon Bochenski. The Mayor's Air Service Expansion Committee was formed to address growing concerns with flight options from the Grand Forks International Airport (GFK). The Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation (EDC) supported the mayor by aiding in convening local businesses and community leaders.

"This has been a tremendous effort in a short period of time, our goal is simple—to increase flight options out of Grand Forks creating competition and lowering airfares for our community." Mayor Brandon Bochenski said in a statement. "Many doubted the success of our strong community coalition, once again we succeeded on a national level and our momentum continues to grow."

The grant funding will ease financial pressure so that a new airline coming to the community will not suffer losses as they build a clientele for the new service. To demonstrate the demand for additional air service to airline officials, the group collected business community feedback through surveys and listening sessions, compiling the information. Before applying for the grant, GFK secured a letter of intent from SkyWest, a partner of United Airlines, stating they would work with GFK and the community to develop non-stop service to Denver after the grant award is received.

The grant award is only possible because of an engaged business community and 40-50% financial commitment to match the \$1 million federal grant request. This was achieved through the convening of business leaders through the Mayor's Air Service Expansion Committee, by the City of Grand Forks' financial contribution and pledges from 34 regional businesses and organizations. The Grand Forks City Council approved a \$300,000 contribution, which accelerated the business community pledges of \$209,000. Additional financial support was achieved with in-kind contributions. GFK will be waiving some typical fees such as landing fees for the airline that expands. GFK and other community organizations also pledged marketing support promoting the new air service. A total of nearly \$1.086 million in matching funds and in-kind contributions have been pledged leveraging the SCASDP grant by approximately a 109% match.

"We're thrilled that GFK was awarded the \$1 million to address the shrinking air service options and expand flight availability at GFK," said Keith Lund, EDC President & CEO. "This would not have been possible without the pledges from several private businesses and civic organizations. Thanks to the tremendous leadership of Mayor Bochenski, the community stepped up to support the initiative. Air service connectivity is a key underpinning of a growing business environment. While we will take a moment to celebrate, in reality, the work begins now. The city, the airport authority, and local businesses will need to come together and leverage these resources to secure new westbound air service. The grant award will help and entice a carrier, but we will only be successful long-term if we prioritize flying out of GFK."

With the extended downturn in local air service, the City of Grand Forks hired The Meehan Aviation Group (TMAG) in partnership with GFK for this crucial effort, returning the airport to a needed growth trajectory as the community is seeing tremendous growth and development. "In my 30 years in the industry, I have never seen a greater community response and engagement to bring this application home, that is a testament to the leadership of the City of Grand Forks," stated Sonjia Murray of TMAG in a statement. "The award of this grant strengthens Grand Forks' position to attract and support frequent daily United service in Denver as we continue to work on enhancing Delta and Allegiant offerings."

Pledging Organizations

- AE2S
- Alerus
- Altru Health System
- American Crystal Sugar
- Black Gold Farms
- Bremer Bank
- Choice Bank
- City of East Grand Forks
- City of Grand Forks
- Crary Real Estate
- Edgewood Healthcare
- First State Bank
- General Atomics - ASI
- Gershman Enterprises
- Grand Forks Region EDC
- Grand Forks Subaru
- Hal's Steakhouse
- Happy Harry's Bottle Shops
- Ideal Aerosmith
- JLG Architects
- Minnkota Power Cooperative
- Nodak Electric Cooperative
- Norby's Work Perks
- Northern Tier Seed Company
- Opp Construction
- PCL Community Contractors
- PS Industries
- Rydell Cars
- Sanford Health
- Sproule Farms
- The Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks
- True North Equipment
- University of North Dakota
- University of North Dakota Alumni Association and ND Foundation
- Visit Grand Forks

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About Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation

The Grand Forks Region EDC works collaboratively to foster an environment that attracts innovative people and business investment to Grand Forks County and the surrounding region, enhancing economic vitality for long-term prosperity and growth. GrandForks.org

