



September 30, 2013

“Friedman Memorial Airport in Sun Valley awarded \$500,000 federal grant for new nonstop air service to improve eastern connectivity”

The United States Department of Transportation has announced that Friedman Memorial Airport (SUN) has been awarded a \$500,000 Small Communities Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant to pursue new nonstop air service that allows better eastern connectivity to and from the Wood River Valley. A total of 59 communities submitted grant requests and 25 were awarded grants totaling \$11.5 million. The grant is for one year only.

The Friedman Memorial Airport Authority submitted the grant in July which was compiled in partnership with Fly Sun Valley Alliance and the Sun Valley Resort with assistance provided by air service consulting firm Mead & Hunt. The grant request was for funding to allow the area to pursue contract air service between SUN and Denver or another similar hub such as Chicago that will facilitate expanded connections to eastern markets.

“This is one more positive step in improving our community’s air service,” said Friedman Memorial Airport Authority Chairman Ron Fairfax. “This big accomplishment would not have been possible without the commitment of the Friedman Airport Authority, Fly Sun Valley Alliance and Sun Valley Resort, and we are all excited to work on getting this new service in place in 2014.” That the airport and community received this major air service grant for a second time is notable, said Fairfax. “We secured our first new nonstop service from a new market, Los Angeles, through a \$600,000 grant from the SCASDP in the first year of this program in 2002. We still have that contracted service with Alaska Airlines over a decade later because of the ongoing commitment of Sun Valley Resort and Fly Sun Valley Alliance to support that service.”

Sun Valley Resort Director of Marketing & PR Jack Sibbach said that United Airlines wrote a letter of support of the airport’s grant application stating their desire to work with SUN on this potential new service so discussions would begin soon between the airline and community partners. He said the hope is that an agreement can be reached to start new service in 2014 but many contract details will need to be worked out. United will begin serving the Sun Valley area on December 12, 2013 with non-stop daily flights from San Francisco (SFO) in winter and summer seasons as part of a recently negotiated air service contract with Fly Sun Valley Alliance and Sun Valley Resort. It is the first new airline to serve SUN in over 20 years.

Eric Seder, President of the Board of the non-profit Fly Sun Valley Alliance said securing this grant and the new San Francisco route underscores the importance of voter approval of the 1% Local Option Tax (LOT) on the ballots in Ketchum and Hailey this November. “Clearly the federal government understands the importance of investment in air service access for small communities, which is why this grant program was set up,” said Seder. “We are excited to be offering new service to potentially two new cities next year. This new service will have a huge and immediate impact on tourism and our local economy. But this grant for new service is one year only, and any continuation of that service must be supported through local efforts. If we want to be able to sustain and market these flights, much less add any additional cities, we absolutely must have a dedicated funding source as part of a private-public partnership for air service.”

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