

January 2014

Terrible Air Service? No, Just Reality

Just about anywhere you live, you will hear the familiar lament that “we” have awful air service. While in many communities that is somewhat true, especially considering the consolidations and changes made by the airlines to survive over the past decade, however, the air service we have here in the Reno-Tahoe region, in comparison to others, is actually very good.

At EDAWN we are often asked what we can do to “improve” our air service. We are told there is “no” service to the “Bay” area and that we are losing so much air service we are no longer competitive as a location for business. The reality is that there are between 7 and 8 flights to the Bay Area daily, and while we have less air service than we have had in the past, so does every other non-airline hub airport. Let’s look at the facts, because ***based on our population our air service is excellent:***

1. On a per capital basis we fill 4.7 airline seats each day per 1,000 in population which is ***better than double the ratio for Sacramento and Boise***. Better than nearly all the other non-airline hub airports and even better than Phoenix!
2. We have ***4.14 flights per year*** for every 1,000 residents compared to Phoenix (3.6); Spokane (3.1); Oklahoma City (1.8); and Colorado Springs (1.4).
3. In October 2013, The Reno-Tahoe International Airport (RNO) was served by seven major airlines providing 53 daily departures to 15 non-stop destinations.
4. RNO is the 65th busiest commercial airport in the nation, while we only rank 116th in size for our metro area.

Airlines determine where to fly and how often to fly there, not airports or cities. Airlines are in the business of making money and they expect their planes to be 80% full every time they fly. The flights that fall below this fill percentage are the first to get cut.

While we have an excellent team at the Reno-Tahoe Airport working to add and retain our existing air service, the only sustainable way to keep what we have and even get more service is to fill the airplanes.

The best way to fill the airplanes and increase our air service is to grow our economy by working to increase our flying visitor traffic and increasing our business activity. The RSCVA is working to grow the visitor traffic and EDAWN is working to grow the economy by adding companies to the region. ***We all need to fly more*** and encourage our companies to do more business here; meetings, conferences and conventions. And while we’re at it, let’s recognize the reality of air service competition and acknowledge how good ours really is!