

Local/Regional Press Coverage



Do you want to Dial-A-Ride or catch a bus?

Commissioners will be asked to approve study and plan for grants

By **BETSY CALVERT**
STAFF WRITER

Should Charlotte County get a real bus service or just improve its dial-a-ride system?

A consultant's study hints that it might be time to consider a fixed-route bus service. Reasons include the county's increasing population and also, the development of a big employer known as Sunseeker resorts.

The consultant report by Tindale Oliver states: "As expanding the current on-demand transit services would be very expensive (currently costing \$26 per rider), the addition of regularly-scheduled transit (typically ranging from \$4-\$8 per trip) may provide an additional layer of lower-cost transit and support the needs of both current and potential riders."

These topics are up for debate again at Charlotte County Commission's meeting today, when the board will be asked to approve the next 10-year transit study. Approval of that study is required before the county can apply for the millions of dollars of mostly federal money it needs to run the system it has now, plus any improvements.

The board meeting begins 9 a.m. at the county building on Murdock Circle.

Ten years ago, the last transit study also proposed the standard bus system, but it never happened. County officials have cited the older age of the population, which is frequently not working, as well as the cost of such a system and the spread-out nature of Charlotte County.

This current transit study is based on two major consultant reports, one 100 pages, the other 80 pages, both

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available online under the commission's agenda.

The report compares Charlotte County to Hernando, Citrus and Indian River counties, all of which offer a fixed bus route system, and which the consultants consider to Charlotte County.

The county's demographics trends show steady increases in population with a continued skew toward people over 65, according to the report. The rate of poverty has increased from 8.2% in 2000 to 12% in 2017.

A financial assessment of the current system shows

that for the relatively few riders (about 1,350 individuals), the cost of the current system is dropping, but for the county, the cost per rider is increasing. The report recommends ways of making the system more efficient, including getting the word out to more potential users.

Currently, residents must call in at least 24 hours ahead to request service. It costs \$2 each way, unless the rider is over 60, in which case it is \$1 each way.

The system operates from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., which cuts out late-shift workers. There is no service on Sundays.

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New possibilities

- Fixed routes to Punta Gorda Airport, the beach in Englewood, shopping in Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte, Babcock Ranch
- Vouchers for late shift workers to pay for part of an Uber or Lyft-style ride
- On call drivers for late shift workers
- Less than 24 hour notice for dial-a-ride
- Future electric vehicles
- online ride scheduling
- employers would offer vouchers for their employees

LOCAL BRIEFS

Florida International Air Show

The 38th annual event will be held Nov. 1-3, at the **Punta Gorda Airport**, 28000 Airport Road, featuring the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. Gates open at 5 p.m. on Nov. 1 with performances from 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Evening show

featuring aircraft displays, aircraft performances and a finale fireworks show. Gates open at 9 a.m. on Nov. 2-3 with performances from noon-3:30 p.m. The USAF Thunderbirds will perform Saturday and Sunday only. For more information or to purchase tickets visit www.FloridaAirShow.com.

Duffy, friends do their part to beautify US 41

Former Charlotte County commissioner Tricia Duffy will never stray far from a perceived responsibility to make life better here.

She's proven that often since she stepped down from a paying job overseeing the county's business to a non-paying job as advocate and volunteer. And, she has friends and associates who have the same drive and determination to make



**JOHN
HACKWORTH**
*Commentary
Editor*

Charlotte County the best it can be.

So, long before she knew of Sunseeker's plans to spend big bucks on landscaping in front of its planned resort in Charlotte Harbor, she and a group of volunteers put their own U.S. 41 landscaping plan — called Facelift 41 — in motion.

For the record, Sunseeker is building a 22-acre resort on the waterfront on U.S. 41 just before you cross the bridge going south into Punta Gorda (as if you didn't know). They have announced plans to plant 150 palm trees, put in thousands of shrubs and plant 10,000 square feet of grass along their side of the highway. It should look pretty nice — especially compared to the other side of the street.

Back in 2015, when Duffy was still a commissioner, she got the idea to try to make U.S. 41 (Tamiami Trail) more attractive.

"There were not many trees, we just needed to do something," she said. "The commission said if I got the businesses and other folks together, they would support it.

"So, I said let's go raise some money and get something done."

And she did. Thanks to small and large donations from

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DUFFY

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groups like the Tampa Bay Rays and Charlotte Stone Crabs, her group raised \$37,000 in just a few months.

“We divided (U.S. 41) into pods and hired a landscaper, Powell Nurseries in Punta Gorda (and later Jones Landscaping),” Duffy said. “It cost about \$1,000 per pod to plant trees that were not so big they blocked businesses. That started in 2016.”

The landscaping project was nurtured along by about 35 volunteers that included: Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development; John Elias, Public Works; Erin Galley, Nolan Insurance; Karly Greene, Public Works; Clif Kewley; Kaley Miller, **Punta Gorda Airport**; Ray Slipatchuk, Priceless Ink & Toner; Pam Sperry, Realtor; Commissioner Joe Tiseo; Janis Tobin, Valerie Van Valen and Brittany Williamson, Weiler Engineering.

They met with every business up and down U.S. 41 (at least north to Midway). Because of how the right of way was laid out, they jumped from Midway to Veterans Boulevard and

stopped at Enterprise Drive. The group also requested each business plant something, or at least put out a potted plant to have something green in front of their store or restaurant.

“Some of them even went so far as to paint their building,” Duffy said of the effort to brighten up the county’s main road.

“We even got FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) involved. They were doing resurfacing of 41 and agreed to partner with us. If the county would do the maintenance, they would put in irrigation and plant some trees in the median. I was floored. They spent about \$600,000 or so.

“We did all that and have about \$3,000 left,” Duffy said.

She said because of the layout of the road and sidewalks and lack of right of way, there is little more than can be accomplished — “Our mission is complete.”

Proving once again that a little determination can go a long way.

Shorter bus wait soon?

Charlotte transit app planned for ride requests

By **BETSY CALVERT**
STAFF WRITER

PORT CHARLOTTE — Charlotte County transit riders who currently wait a day or more for scheduled rides will see some improvements in about a year.

Commissioners last week approved a 10-year transit plan, which allows the Charlotte County Transit Division to move forward with projects.

Transit improvements planned right now assume no extra money, and no fixed bus route, even though the county's consultant report hinted that low wage workers need a regular bus route.

The first changes will happen, however, in about a year, Transit Director Rick Kolar told the *Sun*. Riders will be able to use an online 'app' to see where the county bus is currently located. With this, the rider can see how long before the bus would be at their house, and whether they can get a ride on it.

This doesn't guarantee a ride, because some buses can't be diverted at the last minute, Kolar said. But it will be an improvement over the current system that requires scheduling at least 24 hours ahead of time.

"Today, it's manual, and it's extremely hard for us to do," Kolar said of scheduling.

The current system runs Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and shorter hours on Saturday. The cost is \$2 a ride, but only \$1 for anyone over 60.

Some day, a real time system would allow riders to order up a ride on the same day with certainty, Kolar said, but that is not in the near future.

One resident spoke in favor of transit services at the commission meeting.

"I'm for any kind of transportation that we can make possible for our citizens," said Punta Gorda resident Linda Cross.

The county has chosen to stick with a dial-a-ride system for the past 10 years, citing its large elderly, unemployed population, which cannot necessarily walk to a bus stop.

"I'm glad you're finally beginning to accept that there's no way a fixed route system in the near future would work in Charlotte County," Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch told the county's consultant, Richard Dryer. "We don't have the population ... The cost is prohibitive ... It wouldn't work here, certainly not in the near future with our population being less than 4-500,000."

After the meeting, however, Dryer told the *Sun* that he still believes a fixed route system is the way to go.

"We showed it would have been well worth the investment," he said of reports to the county five years ago.

Five years ago, however, local senior citizens were worried about losing their door-to-door service if the county took on a fixed route system, Wendy Scott, coordinator at the Metropolitan Planning Organization, told the *Sun*.

A fixed route would

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attract more users, Dryer said. Currently, only about 1,350 people use the system.

A 180-page report from consulting firm Tindale Oliver notes that the arrival of Allegiant Travel Company's Sunseeker Resort in 2020 along Charlotte Harbor, will bring large numbers of service employees to Charlotte County. If the county does not address the needs of this group, Dryer

told the *Sun*, something else will take over — either individual cars or car pools or commuter van runs set up by the state.

Other new plans include express buses to places like the **Punta Gorda Airport**, the beach in Englewood, or to downtown shopping in Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte. Those buses, however, would not be considered until many years into the 10-year plan, Dryer said.

The other immediate update is that the Transit Division

will get a new facility in the coming year and move from its temporary location in Punta Gorda. The move could improve response time and lower costs, Kolar said, because most riders live closer to the new location on Veterans Boulevard in Port Charlotte, not in Punta Gorda. A grant of \$2.5 million from the Federal Transit Authority will pay for the new facility.

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SUN FILE PHOTO BY STEVE REILLY

Glorida LaGreca, Elizabeth Rupp and Ena Harrison ride a Charlotte County Transit bus in 2015.

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces \$21.8 Million in Infrastructure Grants to 10 Airports in Florida

7/31/2019

WASHINGTON – U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced that the **Federal Aviation Administration** (FAA) will award \$478 million in airport infrastructure grants, the fourth allotment of the total \$3.18 billion in **Airport Improvement Program** (AIP) funding for airports across the United States.

“This significant investment in airport improvements in Florida will fund construction and rehabilitation projects that will help maintain high levels of safety in U.S. aviation,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The Florida grants include:

- **Hilliard Airport in Hilliard, \$150,000** to acquire land for runway approach areas.
- **Inverness Airport in Inverness, \$236,043** to rehabilitate a runway and conduct an aeronautical study for a new satellite based navigation approach for the airport.
- **Key West International Airport, \$9.3 million** to rehabilitate a taxiway and taxiway lighting.
- **La Belle Municipal Airport in La Belle, \$113,818** to rehabilitate a taxiway.
- **Lake Wales Municipal Airport in Lake Wales, \$225,240** to update the airport master plan.
- **Naples Municipal Airport, \$600,000** to conduct an airport noise compatibility plan study.
- **Orlando Executive Airport, \$4.2 million** to rehabilitate a taxiway.
- **Palatka-Kay Larkin Municipal Airport in Palatka, \$453,736** to install taxiway lighting and construct a runway.
- **Punta Gorda Airport, \$6.4 million** to conduct a wildlife hazard assessment and rehabilitate a runway.
- **Winter Haven Regional Airport in Winter Haven, \$72,000** to extend a runway.

The FAA will award grants to 232 airports in 43 states, including American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. Selected projects include runway reconstruction and rehabilitation, construction of firefighting facilities, and the maintenance of taxiways, aprons, and terminals. The construction and equipment supported by these grants will enhance safety and capacity while promoting economic growth in the regions served by each airport.

Airport infrastructure in the United States, with 3,332 airports and 5,000 paved runways, supports our economic competitiveness and improves quality of life. According to the FAA’s most recent economic analysis, U.S. civil aviation accounts for \$1.6 trillion in total economic activity and supports nearly 11 million jobs. Under Secretary Chao’s leadership, the Department is delivering AIP investments for the American people, who depend on reliable infrastructure.

Airports can receive a certain amount of AIP entitlement funding each year based on activity levels and project needs. If their capital project needs exceed their available entitlement funds, the FAA can supplement their entitlements with discretionary funding.

<https://www.floridatrend.com/article/27532/us-transportation-secretary-elaine-l-chao-announces-218-million-in-infrastructure-grants-to-10-airports-in-florida>

Maximize your travel (and vacation) time by flying

July 04, 2019

dennis KIRK
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Air Trek planes await passengers at Punta Gorda Airport. DENNIS KIRK / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Travel Time

While about 90 percent of us drive to get to our vacation spot, there are faster and easier ways to travel. My daughter had planned a trip up to Louisville and was planning on driving – until she did her research.

She calculated travel time and expenses such as gas for (and wear and tear on) the vehicle and travel time.

She also took into account stress of driving in traffic and dealing with inclement weather. After she looked into flying, and finding out how low the fares were with Allegiant Air – not to mention the convenience of leaving from our hometown of Punta Gorda to fly direct to Louisville and being able to spend more time with friends – the choice was easy.

The flying machines have brought our world closer together. Getting to places that took days or weeks of travel now only takes a few hours. Many larger airlines only fly on certain schedules and routes and are limited to larger airports, leaving you to drive for a few hours to your final destination. Other regional airlines are a little more convenient, and then there are charter airlines that cater to families, business people and those who want the extreme convenience to spend more time at their destination.

Let me give you some ideas of travel time from PGD (the Federal Aviation Administration designation for Punta Gorda Airport). Orlando is 45 minutes; Jacksonville, 1.5 hours; same with Destin or Tallahassee. Hilton Head is a little over two hours. The Bahamas is only an hour flight, and you'll be able to swim in crystal clear waters and go barefoot on the white sandy beaches. Key West is less than an hour (which is the trip Nancy and I took).



Along with some of our family, we chartered a flight with Air Trek at PGD (which also boasts the most-used medical transport charter service in South Florida). There are several levels of FAA licenses, depending upon the type of charters the company will be doing. Air Trek has one of the highest FAA levels. But there is more to having a successful air charter business than this.

In business since 1998, Wayne Carr has surrounded himself with well-qualified professionals. The company has FAA-certified mechanics and its own line guys, including well-trained pilots. Our pilot was Jeffry, who is very professional and organized and has a great personality. The operation is run by the key people in the office, such as Sandy and Ashley, who are the first ones you talk to and who do everything to make your trip special and memorable.

Air Trek (www.airtrek.cc) is a full travel and concierge service, with its main goal being to see that you are happy. You can feel confident leaving the details to them. Having air conditioning on a twin-engine aircraft makes for a really comfortable flight. During summer travel season, it's a real blessing. The office personnel supplied us with great, helpful information about things to do at our destination.

Landing at the Key West International airport (KEYW), our pilot was well-known to the airport staff and given priority for parking and service. While in Key West, we took a few tours just to catch up on new happenings, some embellished by the tour guides. We had sailed into Key West and visited many times before, and I still have my "Conch Republic" passport (from when Key West seceded from the Union in the early 1980s).

This trip, if we drove, would take us about 6-plus hours one way. That's a lot of driving. The flight and the related visiting time we had in Key West was well worth the expense. We were back home later that day, too. And did I mention the views from the aircraft were fantastic! (If you have never seen our beautiful state from a lower altitude than an airliner, then you must do this. The blues and greens of the water and thousands of islands and beaches are memories you will never forget.)

These trips aren't for everyone, but flying with Air Trek has made access to many exotic places into a day trip. It is a great value for something so unique.

Yes, the girls in the office can arrange vacation packages, too. They are a booking agent for Sandals all-inclusive resorts.

Do something with your family that is different and out of the ordinary, and the memory will last a lifetime. Enjoy our great outdoors.

Fair winds; calm seas. |

— Capt. Dennis Kirk and his wife, Nancy, are avid mariners and outdoor enthusiasts. Since the 1970s, their love of nature in Southwest Florida has allowed them to experience the dream of writing about their travels and adventures of sailing, fishing or flying out of their homeport on the Peace River, the old DeSoto marina.

Out-of-Market Press Coverage

PUNTA GORDA AIRPORT – REBORN AND HIGH FLYING

July 10, 2019



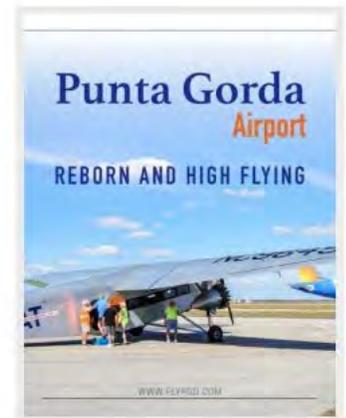
Punta Gorda Airport

Reborn and high flying

Business View Magazine interviews James Parish CEO of Punta Gorda Airport, as part of our series on regional American airports.

What if a disaster was the impetus for growth? Imagine having a clean slate from which to create a better organization. Well, that is exactly what happened at the **Punta Gorda Airport** in Charlotte County, Florida.

“Like most airports in Florida,” begins James Parish, Punta Gorda Airport’s CEO, “we’re a former military training base from World War II. We opened in 1943, and just celebrated our 75th anniversary last year. We transitioned from a military training facility to a general aviation airport in 1945, but the Airport sat unmanaged for the majority of the first 30 years of its life. The county took over and then, quickly after that, gave it to an airport authority. So we’re governed by the elected, five-person, Charlotte County Airport Authority Board. The Authority, when it was first conceived, had taxing authority and the Airport was flourishing. We lost our taxing authority in the early ‘90s and went through a period of – what do you call it – penny-pinching.” Over the following several years, however, Parish says that the Airport hit its stride, with ten new hangars constructed. “In 2004, the budget for the next year was slated to be the best budget we ever had,” Parish notes. “We were going to make more profits than we had in the previous 50 years of our existence. But in August 2004, we got hit by Hurricane Charley, and were wiped out. Every building on the Airport was damaged and over 20 were completely destroyed. 80-some-odd aircraft were completely destroyed and we lost about 50 percent of our tenants. All of the businesses on the Airport were closed for an extended period of time. We had no power and no water.”



AT A GLANCE

WHO: Punta Gorda Airport

WHAT: A commercial and general aviation airport

WHERE: Charlotte County, Florida.

WEBSITE: www.flypgd.com



“But the Airport was part of the community redevelopment,” Parish explains. “We were the staging area for Florida Power and Light and for all the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) services. For the next year and a half, we had a runway closed down with all the Florida Power pole crews, their tree crews, all their re-manufacturing line crews stationed at the Airport. And, during the time, we were doing mostly demolition and starting the idea of rebuilding. One of the things we were able to do during that period was to look at our Master Plan and do some things we never thought we’d have the opportunity to do.”

Using previous Master Plans and moving forward, the Airport Authority was able to improve on many things that had been suggested over the years, but never accomplished. For example, the hangars had been awkwardly placed in 1943, but it was not cost effective to move them or start over. But, having buildings destroyed gives one a lot of freedom to ask what, and how, one can rebuild.

“We also updated a lot of our plans and looked for new revenue streams,” says Parish, “We were heavily reliant on T-hangar rentals. Having lost half of our tenants, and already signed a contract to build 95 new T-hangars, we knew we needed something to replace the lost revenue. In early 2006, we started working with a start-up carrier that was going to come in for the first year, two times a week, out of Columbus. Skybus Airlines started operations here in late 2007. In the first three months of operation, they saw a higher demand than they ever expected. We ended up with six flights a week from Columbus and two flights a week from New Hampshire. And, although they shut their doors in 2008, with the rising prices of fuel, they really proved a market that a lot of people said didn’t exist. So, we went out and started marketing to other airlines with the success of Skybus – at least their success here. And in 2009, Direct Air started flying here, and then shortly afterwards Allegiant started flying here. It’s been a lot of ups and downs with the airlines, but in 2010, Allegiant made this a base. In 2018, we had almost 1.6 million passengers. So, we’ve gone from 15,000 passengers in 2007, to nearly 1.6 million in 2018.”

This unprecedented success has helped create a powerhouse general aviation airport, as well. Punta Gorda has about 400 home-based aircraft and 217 hangars, with a waiting list of about a year for people looking for hangar space. Parish adds that all of the rolling door hangars on the property failed during the hurricane, and so when they rebuilt, they built hydraulic doors which were capable of withstanding a hurricane. The Airport now has some of the best hangar space available with some of the lowest rental rates. In fact, Punta Gorda Airport has not raised its hangar rates in over 14 years and yet it remains profitable.



Florida has a total of 119 airports, 20 of which have commercial service. That means there is a lot of competition among them. Being a coastal community, one of the advantages of Punta Gorda is its location – a mile off Interstate 75, and a convenient drive from either Naples or Sarasota.

“And one of the things we’re noted for is that we have a fantastic contract control tower here,” explains Ron Mallard, Chief Operations Officer and Aviation Director. “It is renowned all through Florida. Basically, Punta Gorda is one of the best airports to operate out of air traffic-wise, and you’ll find it’s probably within the top ten airports in low cost of fuel. It’s really a general aviation-friendly airport and we support that throughout, with our fuel prices, with our hangar rentals, and with our special events that we hold for general aviation. Another thing we do to support the GA side is that, once a month, we have what we call ‘Top Off Tuesday,’ where we go out to all of our tenants in the hangars and provide them self-serve prices on the fuel. We bring them donuts, coffee, or whatever we come up with that Tuesday. So, our tenants have greatly appreciated that. On a whole, we have a very active and great aviation community here.”

“As for further plans,” Parish says, “In 2005, we purchased a hangar-office combo and converted it to the Fixed Base Operations building. Our general aviation terminal was completely destroyed in the hurricane, so we’ve been operating out of about 3,600 square feet plus a 10,000-square-foot hangar since then. In 2020, we will begin construction on a new 13,000-square-foot, general aviation terminal. We will also begin construction on ten 3,600-square-foot hangars and about 10 acres of new pavement on the north side of the Airport to give a little more separation between general aviation and commercial jet traffic. Beyond that, we’re rehabbing and extending our secondary runway, 15/33. It’ll be 6,000 feet one direction and 6,200 in the other. Then, immediately after that, we’ll go into rehab and reconstruction of runway 4/22. We won’t be extending it at all but it’ll go back to 7,195 feet.”

These upgrades will be funded with FAA entitlement money, and, in partnership in the construction of the terminal, with the Federal Department of Transportation, plus monies which the Authority has been banking over the last few years.

According to a Florida Department of Transportation study, the yearly economic impact of Punta Gorda Airport to the local economy is estimated at \$1.27 billion. In addition to the wealth generated from its general and commercial aviation activities (last year, there were 84,000 operations of which 10,500 were air carrier operations), the Airport has an offshoot of Charlotte Technical College, which is planning to train its students in aviation airframe and power plant mechanics; a home-based Civil Air Patrol; and the U.S. division of Applus Laboratories – Arcadia Aerospace Industries. AAI performs inspections on Honda and Boeing structural composite airframe components.

In addition, there are a number of non-aviation tenants on its industrial park property, including FedEx, Pulsafeeder (pumps), and AmeriGas. “The Charlotte County Sheriff is also one of our tenants and they have almost 600 employees here at the Airport,” say Parish. “Plus, we have about 300 acres that’s prime for development. We have roads and infrastructure all in place. One of our newest neighbors is Cheney Brothers, a large food distribution company who just built on 37 acres. We are also, currently, in the process of purchasing 60 acres on the north side of the Airport. We are fortunate that, a number of years ago, the Airport Authority, the airport management, and the county worked together to put an overlay zoning district around the Airport that allows for commercial and industrial development but does not allow for any residential development. So, we have a good two-mile perimeter around the Airport where there can be no additional residential development. So, there’s a lot of land available and we’re just in a prime location for industrial development.”

When all is said and done, however, Punta Gorda Airport’s major attribute is its reborn designation as a prime GA airport with great air carrier service, serving the people and businesses of the tourist mecca that is southwest Florida. “Our Airport gives you the opportunity to travel to 40-plus, nonstop destinations and it brings those people from all over the country into our community,” says Parish, in conclusion. “And, because of our success, Allegiant has chosen Southwest Florida as the location for their first resort. They are building the first phase of a \$450 million resort right on the harbor, five or six miles from the Airport. So, we’re excited about that partnership with them. The important thing, I think, is that this Airport works extremely well between general aviation and the air carriers. There’s no animosity whatsoever. Everybody flies well on the airfield here.”

<https://businessviewmagazine.com/punta-gorda-airport-reborn-high-flying/>

Allegiant to No Longer Offer Flights to Las Vegas from MidAmerica Airport During Offseason

JULY 31, 2019 JOSEPH BUSTOS BELLEVILLE NEWS-DEMOCRAT

Beginning next month, Allegiant Air will cease offering year-round flights to Las Vegas from MidAmerica St. Louis Airport. Flights will cease Aug. 12 and resume Feb. 14, 2020.

“We previously offered the BLV to LAS route year-round but, due to changes in the demand patterns, it will now be offered seasonally,” said Sonya Padgett, a spokeswoman for Allegiant.

“It has always performed strongest in the spring and summer months when kids are out of school and families are taking their spring and summer vacations. We strive to be highly responsive to customers’ needs, which means our network planning team is constantly measuring demand and adjusting schedules when necessary.”

The last day the airline has scheduled a flight from MidAmerica to Las Vegas for this year is Aug. 11. The route is scheduled to resume on Feb. 14. Flights are predominantly scheduled for Mondays and Fridays.

Allegiant first operated out of the county-owned MidAmerica Airport from 2006 to early 2009 with flights to Orlando and Las Vegas. Allegiant’s [MidAmerica to Las Vegas route restarted in 2015](#). The flights were year-round until this year.

The airline also has seasonal flights to Fort Lauderdale, [Jacksonville, Florida](#), [Myrtle Beach, South Carolina](#), and [Phoenix](#).

There are year-round flights to [Punta Gorda](#), Sanford, Destin and the Tampa-area in Florida.

The decision to go to seasonal for Las Vegas was made after the route’s passengers was down last year, said Airport Director Tim Cantwell.

“Allegiant looks at all this stuff. They (have) 110 airports. They look at what did good last year,” Cantwell said.

Cantwell however said he wasn’t concerned that Allegiant made Las Vegas a seasonal route as flights and passengers are still up at the airport, such as flights to Destin are seven days a week.

He said the number of passengers flying out of the airport is up 15 percent from last year.

Earlier this month, the [airport touted the number of passengers](#) coming through MidAmerica. The airport expected to reach its highest number of monthly passengers on record in July, with roughly 45,000 passengers expected to use the airport. That’s roughly 3,000 more than in June.

In 2013 there were 25,000 passengers for the entire year, Cantwell said.

“We are excited to serve the most passengers who have ever flown through MidAmerica Airport in a single month, and we fully expect the exciting growth trend to continue as word continues to spread about the hassle-free experience we offer,” St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern said in a news release at the time.

Rebuild Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s capital plan to improve infrastructure in the state, includes \$96 million for extending the MetroLink light-rail line from the Shiloh-Scott stop to MidAmerica Airport.

https://www.aviationpros.com/airlines/news/21090759/allegiant-to-no-longer-offer-flights-to-las-vegas-from-midamerica-airport-during-offseason?utm_source=AIRB+E-Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AVVDB190731005&o_eid=2661H1181645I3Q&rdx.ident%5Bpull%5D=omeda%7C2661H1181645I3Q