

# NORTHWEST HERALD

## Area residents look west for air travel

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ROCKFORD – Since its passenger service was re-established in 2003, Chicago Rockford International Airport has focused much of its marketing on Western Illinois, Southern Wisconsin and the surrounding Rockford area.

That's why, when surveys of boarding passengers taken during the last two years showed about 35 percent of business was coming from the western Chicago suburbs, RFD Director Mike Dunn decided it was time to expand the airport's reach.

"We've never really advertised or marketed much into that region," Dunn said. "The awareness that we're drawing (passengers from the east) now. ... We're going to really start marketing it because we're going to be adding a few new destinations this year."



Established as one of the original chartered authorities in 1938, Rockford International spent the 1990s and early 2000s strictly as a cargo airport. Today, it's added to cargo offerings as a special destination airport that flies to five U.S. vacation spots and three more outside the country. The airport will announce two more destinations soon, Dunn said.

**RFD also serves as a diversion airport for Chicago O'Hare International Airport. The 3,000 acres of total property at the Rockford Airport is about five times as much as Chicago Midway International Airport, Dunn said.**

**"The reality is we have a world-class facility here," he said.**

Dunn said while he's pleased with the amount of people coming from suburbs like McHenry County without having targeted the area, he views the numbers as an opportunity for further growth.

"It's one of those things that's never really been punched hard into the suburban areas, and that's one of my goals now," he said.

The options at RFD are limited, but if they line up with where you want to go, you can't beat the simplicity of the experience, Dunn said. Free parking and free shuttle add to that experience, he added.

The airport offers flights through Allegiant Air or Frontier Airlines to Las Vegas, Tampa Bay, Orlando, Phoenix and Denver, and international destinations, including Cancun, Mexico and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Service to Montego Bay, Jamaica, will be added in January.

"We're very proud to say we're a leisure destination airport," Dunn said. "We're not a business airport. Being able to move through here in a very simple way – it enhances the vacation experience."

# Area residents look west for air travel (continued)

Things are going well for RFD outside of passenger flights, too.

**The on-site UPS air hub sorting facility is the second largest such location in UPS's domestic division, helping to make RFD a top 25 cargo airport in the U.S.**

In the last month, the airport has generated revenue from nearly 50 flights landing at RFD due to its designation as an O'Hare diversion airport.

The airport currently is planning terminal expansion to help increase its presence in the Chicago area in the coming years.

"We think we've gotten the absolute most efficiency at the airport," Dunn said. "We've approved the budget now to engage architects and do the terminal expansion and, hopefully, by 2014 we'll have that under way."