

Yakima Rejoins the Jet Set

'Travel bank' deal with local businesses brings back daily commercial jet service to region after a quarter century of propeller-only flights.



YAKIMA—Early this month, jet service is expected to return to the Yakima Air Terminal/McAllister Field for the first time in 25 years.

A coordinated effort by business leaders, including the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce and a local group, Friends of the Airport, helped the city land two daily round-trip Delta Air Lines flights between Yakima and Salt Lake City, using a 50-seat Canadair CRJ-200 regional jet.

The groundwork for the new service was laid in an agreement between Delta and Yakima officials. Together, they set up an "airline travel bank," a revenue-guarantee and marketing program through which local businesses commit to spend a certain amount on airfare over a given period. In this deal, arranged in March, participating Yakima companies pledged to spend at least \$2,000 each on Delta flights between June 2007 and August 2008.

By mid-April, 78 area businesses and organizations had paid a total of \$430,000 into the travel bank account for tickets on any Delta flights, not limited to the Yakima service. The amount fell short of the contingency goal of \$500,000 and 100 contributors, but was expected to climb somewhat higher and be sufficient for Delta to commence the service.

A travel bank arrangement also helped bring Delta service to Eugene, Ore., in

spring 2004, when 61 area businesses raised a total of \$560,000.

Salt Lake City is a major hub for Delta, with 101 flights scheduled daily. Convenient eastbound flights for business travel are seen as "a key element of our economic development efforts," according to a March 29 editorial in the *Yakima Herald-Republic*, which called the arrangement "one of the most positive economic incentive stories in recent memory."

Limited air service from the Yakima terminal at McAllister Field has been a regional

concern for several years. The airfield buzzes with charter, private and military aircraft, but Seattle-based Horizon Air provided the only regularly scheduled commercial service since October 2001, when United Express pulled out of the market in reaction to the downturn in air travel following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Routes offered by Horizon and United have used turboprop aircraft rather than jets. The last jet service in Yakima was discontinued by PSA in 1982.

—Brenda Pittsley



Ranchers Make a Comeback

Mad cow disease a distant memory for state's beef industry.



MABTON—It's been more than three years since Washington cattle ranchers experienced their brush with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, better known as mad cow disease, but the mad-cow incident is a fading memory as the state's

cattle ranchers continue to rebound.

Today, ranchers face a new set of problems, including a shortage of slaughter facilities and record high corn prices. Corn, which is used to augment cattle diets, is increasingly pricey, thanks in large part to the growing demand for corn in the production of ethanol.

In December 2003, federal officials traced a Holstein cow infected with the disease to Sid and William Wavrin's Sunny Dene Ranch, located about 50 miles west of the TriCities. It was the first of a series of discoveries of the disease in the United States that would hurt this state's 13,000 ranchers and 810 dairy farmers. The incident also led to a ban on imports of American beef by some foreign countries.

Since then, new controls and screening procedures for the cross-bor-