

Published: Thursday, April 2, 2009

## Paine Field deal in the works

### Horizon Air would offer limited service out of new \$3 million terminal

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EVERETT -- Horizon Air could reach an agreement with Snohomish County as early as next month to operate flights from Paine Field.

Environmental hurdles for a new terminal building could be cleared by the fall, a county official said, potentially clearing the way for flights to begin.

The county, which owns and operates the airport, has been talking with two airlines, Horizon of Seattle and Allegiant Air of Las Vegas, that have expressed interest in Paine Field.

The county expects to have a draft of an agreement with one of the two airlines in hand by May, deputy county executive Peter Camp told the Snohomish County Council in a Monday briefing.

He didn't specify at the time which airline could be the first to strike an agreement, but said later, "We are farther along with Horizon than with Allegiant."

Dan Russo, a spokesman for Horizon, said he doesn't see any reason why the airline can't reach an agreement with the county by May.

"We are the ones that they've been talking to about the design of a terminal building to accommodate commercial service," Russo said.

Horizon plans to offer two daily flights to Spokane and up to four to Portland, Ore., on its 76-seat Bombardier Q400 high-speed turboprops.

It's uncertain when those flights would begin. A modular terminal building could be put together in four to six weeks, airport director Dave Waggoner said.

Environmental studies, however, would likely take at least until fall, Camp said.

The city of Mukilteo will use that environmental process to try to prevent the flights, Mayor Joe Marine said. Mukilteo and several other south county cities oppose commercial flights at the airport, citing concerns about noise and property values.

Officials with Snohomish County, which owns and operates the airport, rolled out plans Monday for a modest, modular terminal building for two airlines. It would not be a Taj Mahal, officials say.

"This is not an expensive design," Camp said in briefing the County Council on Monday about plans for an 18,000-square-foot building -- just big enough to handle a planeload of passengers each for Horizon Air and Allegiant Air.

The terminal project would cost a little more than \$3 million, Waggoner said. Details regarding financing weren't discussed Monday, but one way or another, the airlines would pay for the building, Camp said. The county wants an agreement in hand before it commits to building a terminal.

"The county is not going to subsidize commercial air service, that's a fundamental principle and is nonnegotiable," he said.

Federal law requires airport operators that receive funds from the U.S. government to make space available to airlines that wish to provide service, but it does not require them to help the airlines financially.

Camp's stance is in keeping with that of his boss, County Executive Aaron Reardon, and most of the County Council members, who say they oppose commercial air service at the airport.

All five councilmen recently said building a terminal would help the county maintain more control over any air service than allowing the airlines to build it.

The county is divided on commercial air service at Paine Field. People who live closer to the airport and under its flight paths tend to oppose commercial passenger flights, while many businesses and cities in other parts of the county have lent their support.

The new terminal would be built on a paved area currently used for parking by visiting aircraft, which often is not full, Waggoner said. It would be connected to the current terminal -- basically a 525-square-foot waiting area -- with a covered walkway.

The new building would be equipped with one ticket counter, baggage handling area and office for each airline; a security screening area and offices for the Transportation Security Administration; restrooms; and a seating area for 225 screened passengers.

Passengers would park in one of two existing lots, totalling about 300 spaces. Payment would be on the honor system, with people asked to put money in a box slot corresponding to a space. There would be room to add more parking later if needed, Waggoner said.

If the airlines start service and then back out, they'd still have to make sure the building is paid off, Camp said.

"The council and executive are very clear that the taxpayers will not be left holding the bag on this," he said.

The building could be converted to offices or other uses, Waggoner said. On the flip side, it would not preclude construction of a larger terminal in the future, he said.

*Reporter Noah Haglund contributed to this story.*

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