



**Kansas Legislative Budget Committee**  
**Eric Johnson, President/Director of Airports, Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority**  
**Regarding KDOC Grant to MTAA to Promote Commercial Air Service**  
**Thursday, November 15, 2012**

The Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority (MTAA) is identified by statute as a political subdivision of the State of Kansas charged with management and promotion of Topeka Regional Airport and Billard Airport.

The MTAA received Department of Commerce funding of \$1,000,000 in the FY 2013 budget to attract and support commercial air service to Topeka. The MTAA also submitted an application to the U.S. DOT, Small Community Air Service Development Program for a matching amount. A SCASD grant was awarded to the MTAA in the amount of \$950,000.00 to be used as a minimum revenue guarantee for Topeka air service.

The KDOC grant is actually with Go-Topeka (Greater Topeka Area Chamber of Commerce) and the formal agreement between those two organizations has been drafted and will be signed soon.

The MTAA proposes the use of a minimum revenue guarantee similar to the Manhattan Airport model to attract commercial air service. Once the MTAA and the airlines have agreed to a minimum load factor, funding will only be made available to the airlines if the average quarterly loads fall below the agreed-to levels.

Our short-term goal is to start with commercial service to a major hub, initially either Chicago or Dallas. Ultimately, our goal is to secure commercial air services to additional hubs that will facilitate air travel to all parts of the country. Following the award of the State and Federal grants, we met with two airlines to discuss the opportunities in Topeka. We are finalizing our effort to obtain letters of support from area businesses expressing their interest in regional air service. We will be providing these to the airlines as a demonstration of the local support for service. We anticipate having an agreement in place with an airline by June 2013.

Several years ago, the MTAA contracted with Sixel Consulting Group (SGC) to develop a Leakage/Retention Analysis of the Topeka market. This report identified approximately 600,000 passenger trips by area residents through the Kansas City International Airport at an annual cost of nearly \$127 Million. Based on the potential gain to the State's economy by reclaiming even a portion of these passengers, the effort and financial support is clearly warranted. To quote U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood upon the award of the SCASD grant, "Local air service provides a critical link between our small communities and the nation's air transportation system. This grant will help Topeka improve its air service and provide better travel options for its residents."

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