

Airport director updates Laughlin town board

By JIM MANIACI/News West

Published: Sunday, July 18, 2010 10:02 PM MDT

LAUGHLIN — Laughlin-Bullhead International Airport manager David Gaines again expressed his eternal optimism that the bi-state local terminal will land a scheduled airline within a few years, when he spoke to the Laughlin Town Advisory Board on Tuesday.

Three airlines recently showed the beginning of interest at starting to look at analyzing the possibility of adding new routes, he said.

Gaines emphasized that it will be up to the Tri-state communities to promote scheduled service, once obtained. He indicated several times that failure to push residents and businesses to use the service would cause the airline to depart.

Studies show the Los Angeles area would be the desired destination of more than half of those sampled, then northern California, Oregon and Washington; one-third of the passengers would want to land east of the Mississippi River, he said.

According to Gaines, two Mohave County Airport Authority (MCAA) consultants have shown the local airport market will be viable.

He explained the local "catchment area" (60-minute drive) is 5 percent of the 150-minute McCarran International Airport at Las Vegas catchment area. Laughlin is a 90-minute drive from McCarran. There are 110,000 residents in the Laughlin-Bullhead catchment and 2.2 million in the McCarran catchment.

Studies show 20 percent of the local catchment passengers would be retained, in addition to the non-stop charter flights to 100 cities for two of the nine casino-hotels just this year.

He also detailed the old Essential Air Service subsidies for small airports with scheduled service when deregulation began — why Kingman has an airline — and the new Small Community Airport Service Development grant of \$500,000 to L-BIA.

The latter required additional financing from the community; area leaders raised \$130,000 cash, plus pledges for advertising.

And Gaines explained the relationships and services of the national-international carriers, their regional affiliates, the low-cost carriers and commuter lines.

A problem is that commuter lines use airplanes holding up to 39 passengers while the smallest commercial craft now being built holds 50 passengers.

Advisory Board Vice Chair Janet Barela sits on the MCAA board of directors and is the Laughlin Chamber of Commerce manager. The authority operates the airport in north Bullhead City.