



Airport continues search for airline Facility still looking for right fit

By NEIL YOUNG/The Daily News

Published: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 1:04 AM MDT

BULLHEAD CITY — "It just didn't quite fit the requirements for the service we need," said David Gaines, Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport director.

Gaines was referring to six months of unsuccessful negotiations with The Charter Group, LLC, to bring scheduled passenger air service to his facility.

"The way it would have worked, the Charter Group would have contracted with the airline (Charter Air Transport) and then the Charter Group would have contracted with the Airport Authority," Gaines said.

The agreement would have had to be approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which issued a \$500,000 grant to help the airport obtain air service. "It didn't quite fit what USDOT required," Gaines said.

The search for an airline to serve the airport continues, hampered by an economy in which businesses, including airlines, are reluctant to expand at this time.

Lack of scheduled air service hasn't affected the airport's bottom line too much, however. "The airport is operating way in the black," said Wade Faul, Mohave County Airport Authority board treasurer and finance committee chairman, at the MCAA's quarterly meeting Tuesday.

An estimated \$42 million worth of projects is slated over a four-year period:

2010 — \$1.9 million has been budgeted for the new aircraft rescue firefighting building design, a high-speed runway sweeper, helicopter parking apron (design and construction) and runway extension design.

2011 — \$13 million has been set aside for the firefighting building construction, firefighting vehicle, environmental assessment for land acquisition, runway extension site preparation and design.

2012 — \$10.85 million is budgeted for runway extension construction, taxiway extension, and pavement rehabilitation on the currently existing taxiway, two lighting systems, and erosion and drainage projects.

2013 — \$15 million is earmarked for state land acquisition to prepare for airport expansion to the south.

Approximately \$40 million of the \$42 million comes from the federal government, derived from aviation taxes. The remaining 5 percent is split between the state of Arizona and the airport.

Another source of income for the airport is a \$2 PFC (Passenger Facility Charge) for every person boarding an aircraft, racking up \$434,000 over a two-year period. The money can be used only for capital improvement projects. "You have to specify what projects you're going to collect the PFCs for," Gaines said.

During an annual meeting, which followed the quarterly meeting, MCAA members re-elected Faul, Janet Medina and Tom Griffin to three-year terms on the board.

The board re-elected all its officers: John Hastings, president, Medina, vice president, Lloyd Shires, secretary, and Faul, treasurer.

Comments were made regarding the recent renewal of Gaines' contract for an additional three years.

Hastings praised Gaines for "good, solid long-term planning."

"Dave and his staff have done an exceptional job," said Board Member Jim Zaborsky.

"I will concur that the staff is exceptional," Gaines said. He added that he and Darryl Thompson, assistant airport director, complement each other as a management team.

Gaines also noted the "guidance and support" he's received from the MCAA board.