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Federal funds helped to launch Gateway airport

By Scott Smith
Commentary

As Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport officials celebrate 1 million total passengers in just two short years of scheduled passenger service, it is obvious that investing in infrastructure development at the burgeoning airport is a good idea.

Gateway serves millionth passenger [<http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/149109>]

We're proud to have worked together to help secure the critical funding needed to expand the passenger terminal and enhance airfield safety and efficiency. We believe these projects will lead to the creation of new high-paying aerospace jobs and facilitate expanded passenger service.

In 2007, some people in the Valley didn't know Gateway Airport was a commercial airport, and even fewer had heard of the new startup airline, Allegiant Air. Much has changed in the past two years:

- Gateway has proven that passenger service can be more than just sustainable but profitable as Allegiant Air continues to post record profits.
- Allegiant Air, operating 150-seat, MD-80 aircraft, initially launched passenger service to eight cities with 20 flights a week in 2007 and has since expanded to serve 20 cities with more than 50 flights a week;
- More than 550,000 total passengers came through Gateway's Charles L. Williams Passenger Terminal in 2009, and airport officials are preparing to accommodate more than 650,000 in 2010.
- In 2009, Allegiant Air's arriving flights delivered an estimated \$69.2 million into the Valley's economy.
- Gateway is bringing new money into Arizona's economy, as a recent study revealed 26 percent of out-of-area visitors would not have visited if Allegiant Air did not provide service.
- New money from Gateway visitors benefits the entire state as 29 percent of them go on to make overnight trips to Arizona locations during their stay — including trips to Sedona, Tucson and the Grand Canyon.
- Gateway also draws passengers from all over Arizona as 20 percent of in-state passengers come from outside the Phoenix metropolitan area traveling to Allegiant destinations.

The vision of Gateway and promise of adding to the quality of life for Valley residents is why we worked hard to secure the funding to construct a new taxiway needed to attract top aerospace companies such as Embraer, Cessna, and Hawker-Beechcraft to the airport.