

Press Release

Contact Michael La Pier, AAE
Title Executive Director
Phone 831.648.7000
Email mike@montereyairport.com



MONTEREY REGIONAL AIRPORT AWARDED \$750,000 GRANT FROM TRANSPORTATION DEPT. TO ADD NON-STOP SERVICE TO CHICAGO

MONTEREY, CA, October 3, 2023 - The Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) has been awarded a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation under the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) for a goal of non-stop service to Chicago.

The grant will be used as a Minimum Revenue Guarantee (MRG) for the service, with the airport investing \$100,000 via the waiving of airport fees for the first 2 years of service.

“We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Transportation has chosen to award this important grant to the Monterey Regional Airport,” said Michael La Pier, Executive Director of the Monterey Regional Airport. “Air service development and attraction is highly competitive. Using these grant proceeds as a minimum revenue guarantee will help position Monterey Regional Airport and our partner agencies at See Monterey and Visit Carmel in a very positive light as we continue our discussions with airlines. Our focus is Chicago, which will provide access to yet another gateway to the Midwest, east coast and international destinations and improve access to our world class destination. Now it is time to roll up our sleeves and work to make this desired new service a reality.”

MRY does not currently have service to Chicago, but a decision on that will be made by American Airlines, which wrote a letter in support of the grant.

“Understandably, record numbers of travelers continue to come to the Monterey Peninsula to experience the plentiful beauty and bounty of our region,” said U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA). “This federal investment will help the Monterey Regional Airport in providing more options to the visitors as well as the locals who demand more ways to get to and from the central coast of California. This type of federal investment in our modes of transportation will help sustain our local economy and improve quality of life for those who visit here, live here, and travel to and from this amazing place that we call home.”

La Pier said Panetta was instrumental in getting the grant for Monterey Regional Airport and thanked him for his leadership and assistance in securing the grant. The Monterey community through a partnership with See Monterey and Visit Carmel helped support the grant and will provide significant marketing support.

“A direct flight from Chicago would be a true game-changer,” said Rob O’Keefe, President & CEO of See Monterey. “Travelers from the Midwest are looking for what we have — an abundance of inspiring coastal experiences. In turn, their spending drives what we’re aiming for in our promotion of the destination — economic vitality and community prosperity.”

“The Chicago market represents an extraordinary opportunity for our region, and we are excited by the prospects presented by a non-stop flight to the Monterey/Carmel area,” said Amy Herzog, Executive Director of Visit Carmel. “We’ve long aspired to provide visitors from Chicago (and beyond) a more direct way to experience the exquisite beauty and timeless charm that define our destination.”

The U.S. Department of Transportation received 48 SCASDP applications and have awarded 20 grants to communities in 16 states. The Small Community Program is unique in that it encourages and affords communities the opportunity to develop their own solutions to their air service based on their particular needs and circumstances. By providing communities the opportunity to develop and implement air service projects tailored to their individual needs, the program aims to maximize the potential for success in the communities’ endeavors.

Air service in and out of MRY is vitally important to the region’s economic growth. Monterey’s key industries include agriculture, defense, higher education and especially tourism. These industries need access to affordable air travel. New service to a major hub in the central U.S. is vital for MRY and the region as it would enable travelers from the eastern half of the U.S. access to the Monterey region via a single connection over Chicago O’Hare Airport.

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About Monterey Regional Airport

Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) is Monterey County’s only commercial airport and accommodates over 450,000 passengers each year. The airport serves eight nonstop markets. We are committed to providing our customers with superior services and a convenient, hassle-free experience in a safe, secure, professional environment. Be sure to visit montereyairport.com or follow @montereyairport on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.