

# THE Messenger

- News
- Opinion
- Forums
- Sports
- Sections
- Business
- Ads
- Jobs
- Local Classified
- CU
- Extras
- Customer Service

## Local News

/ News / Local News /

- Local News
- Local Photos
- News Brief
- Business
- Obituaries
- Lifestyle
- Education
- From Our Files
- News of record
- Iowa News
- National News
- International News
- Religion
- SUBMIT News
- Closings and delays

« Manson town meeting set for...

Babb found guilty»

## Airline passenger numbers surge at Fort Dodge?airport

March 8, 2011

By BILL SHEA Messenger staff writer

Save | Comments (8) | Post a comment |

Finding a parking spot at Fort Dodge Regional Airport is a lot harder these days.

The number of passengers using Delta Air Lines flights there is surging, and the packed parking lot is perhaps the most obvious sign of the increase.

Last month, 729 people boarded flights there. That's an increase of 71 percent from February 2010, according to information presented to the airport commission Monday evening.

The increase was even more dramatic in January, when the 787 passengers represented a 91 percent jump above the figures for that month one year ago.

Rhonda Chambers, the airport's director of aviation, said she believes the increase is due to two things: direct flights to Minneapolis - St. Paul International Airport and a new flight schedule.

She said the number of passengers has grown since June 10, 2010. That's the date when the planes began flying directly to the large Minnesota airport without a stop in Mason City. That's also when a new schedule started. That schedule includes fewer flights, but positions them at times that are considered more convenient for passengers.

Through the first two months of the year there have been 1,516 boardings.

At the current pace of boardings, Fort Dodge will have 10,000 of what aviation experts call enplanements by the end of the year, according to Chambers. When an airport reaches that level of activity it is entitled to \$1 million from the federal government for improvements, she added.

"We're on track to do the 10,000," she said.

The path to 10,000 enplanements has already included a day in which the parking lot was full and additional spaces in front of the former flight service station had to be used, according to Chambers.

Fort Dodge Regional Airport hasn't had 10,000 enplanements since before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

In other business, airport officials are planning to rebuild a 5,300-foot-long runway this summer. Chambers said it was closed twice last summer because the pavement buckled in a couple of spots.

The runway is 100 feet wide, which is the width previously approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. However, the FAA is now saying a 75-foot width is sufficient. Chambers said the agency is

Fort Dodge, IA  
 76°F [Extended Forecast](#)  
[Find Another Location](#)  
Data provided by The Weather Channel ©

## News, Blogs & Events

I am looking for:

in: News, Blogs & Events Web

## Fact Box

FD Regional Airport Boardings
20102011Change
January411787Up 91 percent
February427729Up 71 percent

basing its statement on the fact that the SAAB turboprop planes flown by Delta can use a 75-foot-wide runway.

The airport commission and the Iowa Department of Transportation want to keep the runway at the 100 foot width. Local and state officials are urging the FAA to change its mind, and they've enlisted the help of U.S. Rep. Tom Latham, R-Ames.

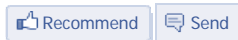
Chambers said keeping the wider runway will provide an extra level of safety and keep the airport prepared for a time when the turboprop planes will be replaced by regional jets.


A reply from the FAA is awaited.

Contact Bill Shea at (515) 573-2141 or [bshea@messengernews.net](mailto:bshea@messengernews.net)

© Copyright 2011 Messenger News. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

[Save](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#) | [Post a comment](#) |



 You recommend this. · [Admin Page](#) · [Insights](#) · **Error**  
You recommend thisSign Up to see what your



[Subscribe to Messenger News](#)

## Messenger News

713 Central Ave. , Fort Dodge, IA 50501 | 515-573-2141

© 2011. All rights reserved. | [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)