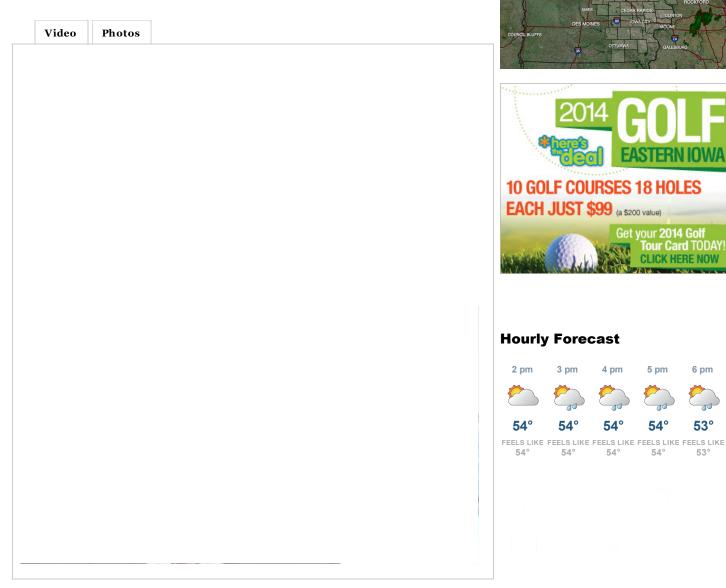
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Eastern Iowa Airport Shaking off Reputation as WEATHER High Fare Facility

By Dave Franzman



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CEDAR RAPIDS, lowa- The Eastern lowa Airport in Cedar Rapids appears to be shaking off its long running reputation as a "high fare" airport.

From the 4th quarter of 2012 until the same time period in 2013, fares at the airport in Cedar Rapids dropped by 16.5%. The average fare that was \$443.25 fell to \$370.29. Due to higher passenger traffic this year, Cedar Rapids has now made it into the listing of top 100 airports in the U.S. And that 16.5% drop in average fares in that time period was the largest for the entire group. By comparison, the average fare in Des Moines during that time period was \$372.28. Moline was still cheaper at \$352.76.

Tim Bradshaw, director of The Eastern Iowa Airport, admits some reputations die hard. And the airport hopes to use the new fare numbers to convince more fliers to check prices at The Eastern Iowa Airport first.

Allie Savage, from lowa City, is one flier who will need some convincing. She was at the airport on Tuesday waiting for someone to arrive. She said when it's time for her to fly, she was in the habit of checking other airports first.

"I did stop checking flights out of here and I usually checked Des Moines or Moline first," Savage said.

Bradshaw said the figures he saw from the United State Department of Transportation report are the kind of thing the airport can use to change minds.

"I jumped for joy to finally see the numbers because we've been suspecting it for a long time that our fares had been equalizing with neighboring airports," Bradshaw said.

Bradshaw became airport director in Cedar Rapids in 2010. He said high fares, by far, is the number one gripe he hears from local travelers.

Bradshaw said Allegiant Air, a low cost leisure airline, arrived ten years ago. But it was the arrival of Frontier Airlines in mid-2012 that seemed to change the competitive situation most recently in Cedar Rapids. Bradshaw said that airline has made flights from Cedar Rapids to the west much more competitive. And even the traditional airlines have noticed the growing passenger traffic and are bringing in some larger aircraft and competing more on price.

Larry and Jenny Moore of Atlanta, Georgia are one couple benefiting from a more competitive fare structure in Cedar Rapids. They have a daughter who lives near Cedar Rapids but until a year and a half ago, they always flew into Moline, Illinois when it was time for a visit. Then they noticed the prices changing and decided to switch destinations.

"We would find fares \$500-600 and that's just prohibitive. And then suddenly it's \$300-\$360 from Atlanta to Cedar Rapids. And we said 'ok' we'll do that," Moore said.

Bradshaw, the airport director, said winning the battle for more competitive fares matters to the airport as well as the airlines. The most recent data suggests 30 percent of the potential fliers in the airport's market area drive somewhere in order to fly. Bradshaw said that costs The Eastern lowa Airport at least \$5-million dollars a year in lost revenue for concessions, car rentals and other services. He hopes the "fare" news brings some of those travelers back.

I Comments: (319) 368-8611; dave.franzman@sourcemedia.net

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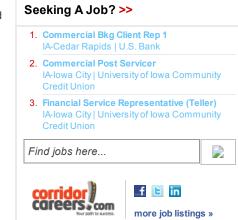
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