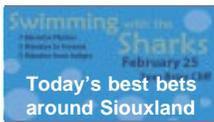




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Frontier Airlines returning to Sioux City airport

Print

11 hours ago • DAVE DREESZEN ddreeszen@siouxcityjournal.com

(2) Comments

SIoux CITY | Frontier Airlines pulled out of Sioux Gateway Airport in May 2008, leaving behind robust passenger counts.

Airport officials say they never gave up on the low-cost carrier someday returning.

"They're one of the many airlines we've been talking to over the years," Sioux Gateway Director Curt Miller said. "We hadn't lost touch with them. It was just a matter of when they got to the right position to add service."

Almost out of the blue, Frontier called Miller about a month ago to let him know that time had come.



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Frontier announced Monday it is returning to Sioux Gateway. Starting June 12, the carrier will fly routes to and from Sioux City and Denver three times a week.

"We are excited to bring Frontier's convenient and affordable service back to residents" in Siouxland, Daniel Shurz, Frontier's senior vice president, commercial, said in a statement.

Frontier will become the second carrier at Sioux Gateway and the only one with a direct connection to a western hub. American Airlines currently flies two daily subsidized routes to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

American is currently competing with United Airports for a new two-year Essential Air Service, or EAS, contract. The EAS program guarantees air service to small or rural airports.

At any time, the U.S. Department of Transportation is expected to select one of the two carriers. American, whose current two-year contract runs through April 30, has proposed to cut its annual federal subsidy nearly in half, from \$1.51 million to \$611,334. United's bid calls for a payout of \$1.41 million per year.

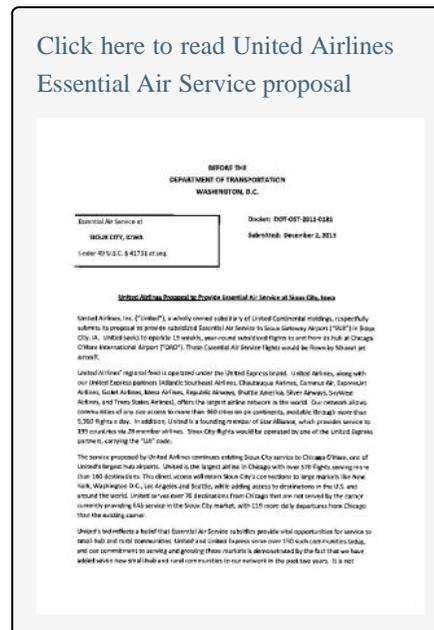
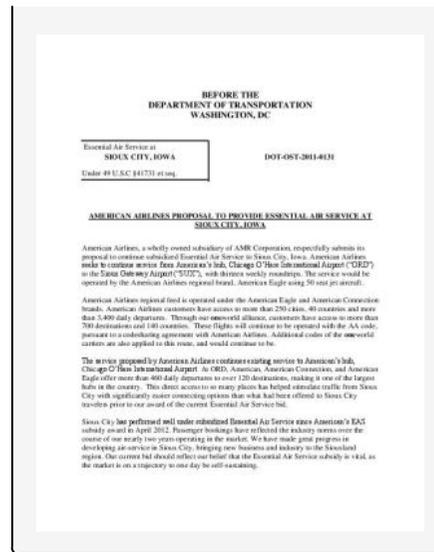
Miller said the thrice-weekly Denver service will complement American's twice daily Chicago flights.

"It'll help with the recreational travelers that we're losing to other airports," he said.

Sioux Gateway Airport Trustees President Dave Bernstein said market data shows most tri-state travelers headed west are still driving to larger airports in Omaha or Sioux Falls.

"We don't see a lot of folks flying from Sioux City to Chicago to go to the West Coast," Bernstein said. "The bulk of what people are using the Chicago service for is go to Chicago and points east."

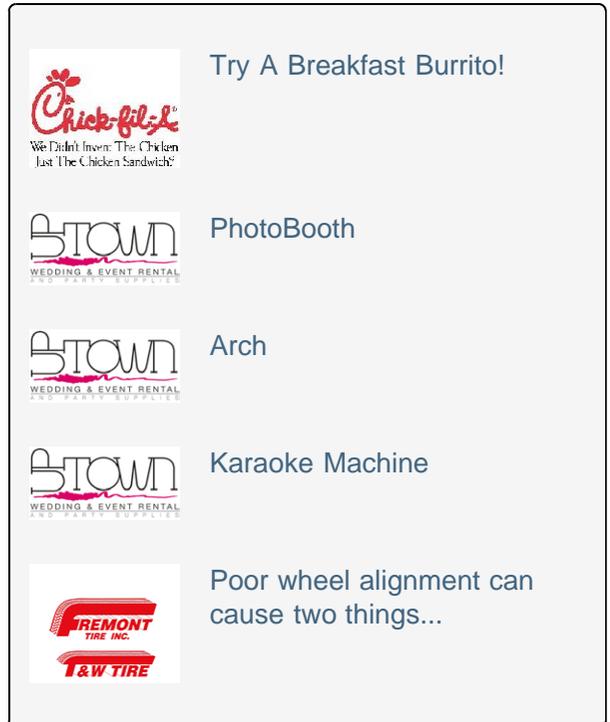
Travelers can immediately start booking Frontier flights to and from Sioux City online at flyfrontier.com. Through midnight Wednesday, the airline is offering introductory



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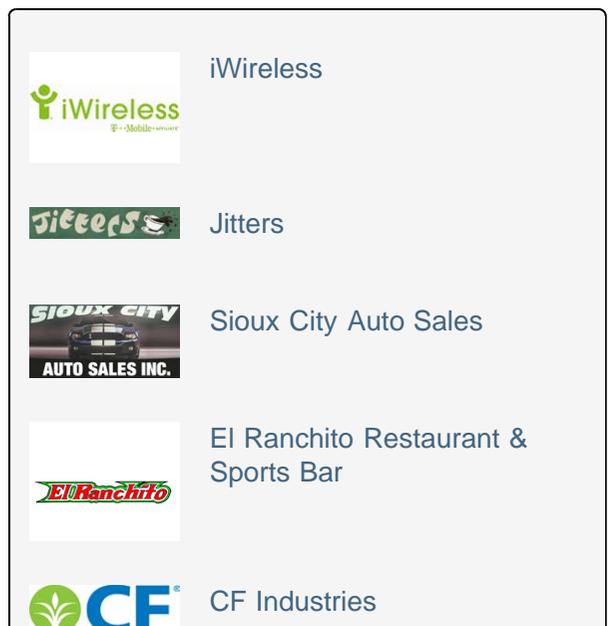
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fares as low as \$49 one way.

Flights from Sioux Gateway to Denver International Airport will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and return trips from the Mile High City will be Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Frontier will fly 138-seat Airbus 319s, which offer amenities that include five rows of stretch seats with an additional 6 inches of leg room. The aircraft holds twice as many passengers as the regional jets Frontier operated during its previous stay at Sioux Gateway.

The airport landed Frontier a second time without offering financial incentives, other than a waiving of landing fees for a limited time, a standing offer the airport makes to new carriers, Miller said.

The first time around, the city and The Siouxland Initiative, the Siouxland Chamber's economic division, enticed Frontier with an aid package that included \$20,000 to upgrade the airline's counter in the terminal, and funds to market the airline during its first year

The airline launched two flights per day to Denver in October 2007. A third flight was later added as passenger loads exceeded 75 percent.

But Frontier pulled the plug in May 2008, ending less than seven months after it began. The cost-cutting move came after Frontier was forced into Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization.

Phoenix-based Indigo Partners LLC in December 2013 completed its purchase of Frontier from Indianapolis-based Republic Airways Holdings for \$145 million.

The new ownership group is focusing its [marketing strategy](#) on small and midsize markets. In addition to Sioux City, Frontier on Monday announced it will start offering nonstop routes to Idaho Falls, Idaho, Bakersfield, Calif., and Missoula, Mont.

Miller noted the airline has been changing its fleet, replacing smaller aircraft with larger jets. That's helped drive the carrier's desire to expand into new markets, he said.

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What we knew: Frontier Airlines discontinued service to Sioux Gateway Airport in May 2008.

What's new: Frontier announced Monday it will return to the Sioux City airport, offering three flights per week to and from Denver.

What's next: The Sioux City-to-Denver routes are scheduled to begin June 12.

Related Links

- [Sioux Gateway Airport website](#)

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Inside

The Journal editorial board views Frontier's return to Sioux City as a sign of continued improvement in the local air service picture. OPINION A8

Speakout

What do you think about the addition of Frontier Airlines at Sioux Gateway Airport? Sound off at [siouxcityjournal.com](#).

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