



REGIONAL ECONOMIC AREA PARTNERSHIP (REAP)
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PRESS ADVISORY
07/9/08

**REAP Awards Funding under
Kansas Affordable Airfares Program**

At its regular monthly meeting of July 7, the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) took action to assure and enhance affordable airfares in Kansas.

REAP recommended the award of a \$5 million state grant to Sedgwick County to address all statutory criteria for the allocation of funding including the priorities of maintaining affordable airfares to eastern and western U.S. destinations and impacting a majority of Kansans. It also renews a contract with AirTran for the 12 months beginning July 1, 2008 and provides for the Frontier revenue guarantee agreement to continue through June 30, 2009. The grant requires a local match of 25 percent or \$1,670,000, which will be pledged by Sedgwick County and the City of Wichita.

"REAP has taken the responsibility for administering the Kansas Affordable Airfares Program as a serious matter, dedicating staff time and efforts into maintaining the transparency and integrity of the program," stated REAP chairman, Mayor John Waltner of Hesston. "Through the process and statutory guidelines enacted by the Kansas legislature, REAP is pleased to once again be able to fund a program that will ensure that air travel is more available, more competitive, and more affordable to all Kansans."

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This grant will continue and enhance a program that saved Kansans \$51.8 million dollars in 2007 for eastern service and is projected to save \$48 million per year on western service, for a savings of nearly \$100 million per year to the residents of Kansas. According to studies conducted by Mid-Continent airport, 3/4 of the State utilizes the airport and the enhancement of this program will continue to lessen the need for Kansans to leave the State when traveling. This program helps many communities throughout Kansas, including some of the biggest users of the Mid-Continent airport: Colby, Hays, Salina, Junction City, Emporia, McPherson, Hutchinson, Great Bend, Garden City, Dodge City, Newton, El Dorado, Independence, Parsons, Winfield, and Wichita.

"Commercial air service in South Central Kansas is an economic development tool that benefits all Kansans," stated Waltner. "People in our state save nearly \$100 million per year which goes back into our economy, our jobs, and our citizens' pockets to spend elsewhere, while also funding the state general fund. It's been a great investment for the State's companies and citizens."

REAP is a council of local governments comprised of thirty-four cities and counties in South Central Kansas. These local governments have voluntarily joined together to guide state and national actions that affect economic development in the region and to adopt joint actions among member governments that enhance the regional economy.

Under the authority of House Substitute for Senate Bill 475 and the omnibus appropriation bill, Senate Bill 2968, both enacted in the 2006 session of the Kansas Legislature, REAP was assigned authority for administering the Kansas Affordable Airfares Program. In both the 2007 and 2008 legislative sessions, Governor Sebelius recommended and the Kansas Legislature appropriated \$5 million for continued funding of KAAP each year.

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