

Contour retained for air services out of Del Norte County Regional Airport

September 16, 2020



Contour Airlines will continue to be the carrier of choice for round trip travel between Crescent City and Oakland.

The U.S. Department of Transportation approved Border Coast Regional Airport Authority's (BCRAA) application for the continuation of service through an Alternate Essential Air Service (AEAS) grant.

Del Norte County District 2 Supervisor Lori Cowan, who sits on the BCRAA board, said at the Supervisors' Sept. 8 meeting things were getting dicey with Contour Airlines, because the current grant's expiration date was nearing.

"They had stopped taking reservations because the contracts hadn't been signed," Cowan said. "Everything is moving forward and that's good news for our community."

On Sept. 11, Representatives Jared Huffman, from California's Second District, and Peter DeFazio, from Oregon's Fourth District and Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, shared the announcement.

"As is often the case, sometimes the lowest-cost alternative is not the best option for the people we serve," Huffman said. "This decision allows communities to continue to benefit from the most reliable service they have enjoyed, and will provide four years of certainty to the communities and the carrier, allowing for a long-term relationship to develop and grow."

"The Border Coast Regional Airport Authority is an essential economic driver for southwest Oregon and provides, quite literally, essential air service for many in the region," DeFazio added. "Continuing passenger service will ensure the communities of Del Norte County, California, and Curry County, Oregon, have a viable air service option, which is why I am pleased that the Department of Transportation has approved this important grant at our urging."

In April, both the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors and the Crescent City Council sent Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao letters in support of Contour, as recommended by the Border Coast Regional Airport Authority. The Authority also received support from Curry County Board of Commissioners, the City of Brookings, the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and the Elk Valley Rancheria. In May Huffman and DeFazio followed suit, writing their support for the grant.

Under this ruling, USDOT provides a \$14.6 million grant over four years to provide between seven to 10 flights per week between Crescent City and Oakland. The new grant takes effect Oct. 1, replacing the one sunsetting at the end of September, and runs through Sept. 30, 2024.

The USDOT chose Contour over another proposal from Boutique Air which was seeking to offer 24 weekly flights service from Del Norte County to Portland, Oregon under the AEAS program.

According to the USDOT, the AEAS program is a subsidy it provides eligible communities to pay for airline service to a large or medium-hub airport. The program subsidizes 60 communities in Alaska and 115 communities in the other continental states that wouldn't otherwise receive scheduled air service.

The Tennessee-based carrier Contour Airlines has provided non-stop service between Crescent City and Oakland in its twin-air, 30-seat Embraer ERJ-135 aircraft, since April 2018 through the AEAS Program. Contour replaced PenAir, which ceased twice daily flights between Crescent City and Portland in December 2017.

Read the official order from the U.S. Department of Transportation online at bit.ly/3iwoga6.