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Columbia Regional Airport pleased with successful first month of new commercial air service

(Columbia, MO) Despite a complex year for Columbia Regional Airport, commercial air service is back on track with even better than predicted passenger numbers. Airport Manager, Kathy Frerking, reports an increase in passenger numbers for Mesaba's (dba Northwest Airlink) scheduled service, which began August 19, 2008. Northwest Airlink makes three daily flights between Columbia and Memphis Monday through Saturday, and two flights daily on Sunday.

For the first 17 days of service in September, the number of enplanements was reported at 770. As a comparison to previous commercial service at Columbia Regional Airport, the monthly enplanement average for the last six months of service was 497. "The numbers have continued to increase each week since the start of service" Frerking said.

Advanced booking numbers for the week of September 13-19 reported a load factor of 59%. This percentage equates to approximately 19 seats sold per flight, based on a 32-seat maximum sell for each flight. In the original proposal from Mesaba submitted last spring to the FAA to bid for the Essential Air Service contract, Mesaba anticipated an average load factor of 42%. Passenger numbers are well above what was predicted for the airline. "Northwest is pleased to provide service to Columbia and its surrounding communities. The projected bookings-on-hand lead us to believe that flight loads are strong after the start-up period" said Kristin Baur, Corporate Communications Manager for Northwest Airlines. Northwest Airlines reports a completion factor of 98.9% and the station's on-time performance at 97.8% for service at Columbia Regional Airport.

Mid-Missouri passengers are finding fares very reasonable to fly from Columbia. At Columbia Regional Airport passengers can expect free parking near the terminal, single security

check-in and shorter lines, free Wi-Fi access, two rental car agencies, a restaurant and comfortable seating on a Saab 340 with flight attendants and restrooms.

Columbia Regional Airport has received strong support from its regional consortium. “At their recent board meeting, the Missouri CORE Partnership voted to fully support and promote the Columbia Regional Airport” said Mike Downing, Executive Director, Missouri CORE Partnership. Downing asked members to support three options:

- 1) Encourage community and business partners to add a link to www.FlyMidMo.com to their website and distribute airport promotional information in their offices.
- 2) Encourage their employees to first check the cost and timing of flights from Columbia to see if it is feasible, factoring in that it would cost an additional \$164 to drive to Lambert Airport in St. Louis (242 miles @\$0.58/mile plus \$24 for 3 days parking). In addition, the drive to St. Louis results in at least 4 hours round trip and longer lines for security and tickets.
- 3) Promote the use of the airport to other businesses and institutions in their community.

“CORE believes that the success of the new Northwest flights is critical to generating interest by other airlines for additional markets” Downing said. The Missouri CORE Partnership is a non-profit economic development organization for the 12 counties of Mid-Missouri.

For more information about flying from Columbia Regional Airport, log onto the airport’s website at www.FlyMidMo.com or call 573-874-7508.

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