



CITY of RAPID CITY  
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

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Communications Division  
300 Sixth Street

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**BUSINESS, TOURISM, CITY OFFICIALS PRAISE  
RC REGIONAL AIRPORT'S YEAR OF RECORDS, ACHIEVEMENTS**

**RAPID CITY, SD--**Today's initial nonstop flight from Rapid City Regional Airport to Phoenix is the latest in a series of numerous achievements in the last year for the region's largest airport. The accomplishments are being hailed by city, business and tourism officials of the Airport's growing importance to the region's economy and its impact on future growth in the area.

"The doors of opportunity for growth and exposure to Rapid City and the Black Hills area have been kicked wide open in the last year with the growth at Regional Airport," said Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender. "Expanding direct flights to some of the country's biggest cities will have very real, positive impacts on our city and area and it's reflected in the record numbers of passengers that are taking advantage of the new flights with a sincere desire to experience this region and all it has to offer.

"These accomplishments could not have been achieved without the leadership of our airport director and the hard work and efforts of the dedicated airport staff who are committed to providing high-quality services and meeting the demands of an ever-increasing number of people utilizing the facility."

In the past 16 months, here are just some of the notable achievements at Rapid City Regional Airport:

**\*(September 4, 2019):** Rapid City Regional Airport begins daily, non-stop, year-round flights to Phoenix.

**\*(July 2019):** Regional Airport sets record-breaking passenger numbers for July and year-to-date. July enplanements were the highest single month on record (from the previous month!) with 44,127 (15.1% increase). Year-to-date numbers through July surpasses July year-to-date numbers for 2018 passenger numbers by 12.5%

**\*(June 22, 2019):** Rapid City Regional Airport welcomes inaugural weekend flights from Los Angeles and San Francisco

**\*(June 2019):** Regional Airport sets single-month record with 38,409 enplaned passengers, a 16.6% increase over June 2018 (record would last a month!). The first-half numbers for 2019 set a record, eclipsing the mark set a year earlier by 11.8%.

**\*(Spring 2019):** Regional Airport receives annual FAA Airport Improvement Grant in the amount of \$4.56 million with a matching grant from the State Department of Transportation in the amount of \$253,278 to fund this year's eligible capital improvements.

**\*(January 2019):** Regional Airport announces record-breaking year of 2018 with total passengers totaling 625,918, a five percent increase over the previous record year set a year earlier in 2017 (595,936)

**\*(2018):** Total number of passengers boarding aircraft at Rapid City Regional Airport increased 5.3 percent in 2018 over 2017 (310,810).

**\*(2018):** Rapid City Regional Airport adds new route to New York/Newark and expansion of the Charlotte route

**\*(October 2018):** New Green Roof project installed by South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. The project received the 2018 South Dakota Hall of Fame Act of Excellence Award.

**\*(September 2018):** New Regional Airport restaurant opens

**\*(Summer 2018):** Regional Airport sets record for summer months of June/July/August with 4.12% increase over previous record summer period of 2010.

**\*(July 2018):** Regional Airport sets record-breaking milestone with first six-month total of 131,147 enplaned passengers, breaking record set in 2010.

**\*(Summer 2018):** Newly-renovated restaurant and gift shop open in Regional Airport

**\*(May 2018):** The airport sets a record-breaking May for number of enplaned passengers, welcoming 25,653 passengers in the month, up 3.38% from the previous record set for the month of May, set in 2010.

**\*(2018):** A Small Community Air Service Development (SCASD) Grant for \$700,000 is awarded to Regional Airport to develop and market the Phoenix daily nonstop flight. This is the third SCASD grant received by Regional Airport to develop new routes (2002 for \$1.4 million and 2014 for \$325,000).

From 2015-2018, Regional Airport's revenue grew 24.5% far outpacing the growth in expenses, which increased 8.73%. Parking revenues are up 39 percent since 2015 and restaurant revenue is up 43 percent over 2018, due in large part to a newly renovated restaurant and gift shop that opened in 2018.

The increased activity and growth at Rapid City Regional Airport has a tremendous impact on businesses in the Rapid City area.

"Visit Rapid City has been privileged to partner with Rapid City Regional Airport by providing marketing dollars in these new emerging fly markets to emphasize Rapid City as a true destination," said Julie Schmitz Jensen, president of Visit Rapid City. "Seeing the results has been exciting and shows how, although we are a famous drive market, we are 'Doing Big Things' in air travel as well. This is the best kind of economic development."

The direct flights from Phoenix and other large American cities means more exposure for Rapid City area businesses and attractions.

"Our Downtown Ambassadors met many visitors from the Phoenix area this summer, who mentioned they love to come here to get away from the heat and would like to visit more often," said Dan Senftner of Destination Rapid City. "A direct flight will most certainly bring more guests to the Rapid City region to explore the many activities and experiences we have to offer."

"I commend the airport director on this latest accomplishment and look forward to the increase in numbers to the area."

More passengers coming in and out of Rapid City also exposes Rapid City to greater growth opportunities for the future, according to Elevate Rapid City executive Pat Burchill.

"A vibrant airport is a very important element of Rapid City's economic growth," said Burchill. "It provides our community access to the outside world and opens our doors to the outside world. Thank you to Patrick and his team at the airport for their outstanding efforts and achievements over the last year."

The airport's stated mission is to provide a safe, environmentally-responsible and fiscally self-sustainable operation ensuring high-quality services and facilities. Airport capacity discussions were initiated by officials in 2016 which resulted in the 2017 Terminal Study document. Planning continues for phased development of the terminal project.

An estimated \$24 million in Regional Airport improvements and enhancements are planned from later this year to 2021 to accommodate the increased growth in passengers utilizing the facility. These improvements include:

- \*Elevator/Escalator Replacement/Construction begins in September
- \*Reconstruct the RTR Road and construction of the airport road in the General Aviation area/currently under design
- \*Gate area expansion and additional gate space/planning process (to initiate in 2020)
- \*General Aviation Area Water Main Replacement Project/2020
- \*Move of ticket counters and adding baggage space/2021 (currently under design)
- \*Replaced numerous inside/outside lighting fixtures including all ramp and general aviation lighting to new Light Emitting Diodes (LED)
- \*New Sewage Treatment Lagoon/2021 (currently under environmental assessment with design to follow in 2020)
- \*New Pay Parking Exit Plaza/2021 (designed and awaiting construction)
- \*Replacement of two passenger boarding bridges/2021

Darren Haar, president of the Rapid City Regional Airport Board, says he has been very pleased with the growth and accomplishments of the Airport in the past 20 months and looks forward to the results of upcoming improvements and expanded services.

"It's an honor to serve on the Rapid City Regional Airport Board, to work side by side with the airport staff and to see so many great, exciting things going on," said Haar. "We have achieved a lot of growth and improvement at the airport over the last year or so. I look forward to the continued improvements and expanded air service that the airport staff will bring to Regional Airport."

The Rapid City area has been served with a municipal airport since 1924. The first municipal airport was located near the railroad track parallel to E. North Street and would be dedicated as Halley Field Airport in 1929. Rapid City Municipal Airport was established at the present site of Ellsworth Air Force Base in 1937 and moved to its current site in 1950. The facility became known as Rapid City Regional Airport in 1980 and the new terminal was placed in operation in November 1988. The facility went through a \$19.5 million renovation in 2012. The 1950 terminal was torn down in 2016.

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Thank you,

**Darrell W. Shoemaker** | Communications Coordinator

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