



Agenda Item: 15.C
Date of Meeting: July 13, 2026
Department: Administration

STAFF REPORT

To: City Council
From: Pam Foster
Subject: **Discussion Regarding Potential Participation in Supporting Year-Round Commercial Air Service at the Eastern Sierra Regional Airport**
Prepared On: July 8, 2026

Background/History:

The Eastern Sierra Regional Airport has experienced significant success in attracting seasonal commercial air service in recent years, improving access to the Eastern Sierra for residents, businesses, and visitors. Commercial air service has become an important regional transportation asset that supports tourism, economic development, business travel, and quality of life throughout Inyo and Mono Counties.

Staff recently participated in a regional meeting regarding the future of commercial air service at the airport. During that discussion, representatives reported that United Airlines has expressed interest in extending its current seasonal San Francisco service to provide year-round flights. According to information presented during the meeting, maintaining year-round service would require approximately \$200,000 in additional annual subsidy beyond what is currently being provided by local funding partners.

Regional partners indicated that the Mammoth Lakes Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) has been a significant contributor toward existing air service subsidies but may be approaching practical limits on its ability to increase future contributions. As a result, participating agencies and organizations are actively exploring additional regional funding partners that may be interested in helping close the remaining funding gap.

Analysis/Discussion:

Year-round commercial air service has the potential to provide a number of benefits to the Bishop community beyond tourism. Reliable air access can improve connectivity for residents, support local businesses, enhance economic development efforts, improve access to healthcare and educational opportunities, and strengthen the region's competitiveness for attracting investment and workforce.

At this time, staff is not requesting that the City commit funding toward this effort. Rather, staff is seeking policy direction from the City Council regarding whether the City should participate

in ongoing regional conversations to better understand potential funding models, partnership opportunities, and the overall value of year-round commercial air service to the Bishop community.

Should the Council express interest, staff would continue to participate in discussions with regional partners and return to the Council at a future meeting with additional information regarding:

- Potential funding mechanisms and partnership opportunities;
- The anticipated economic and community benefits associated with year-round service;
- The City's potential role relative to other participating agencies;
- Any future financial implications requiring Council consideration.

It is also important to note that regional partners are actively pursuing contributions from multiple public and private entities to collectively address the estimated \$200,000 funding need. Any future proposal would likely involve a collaborative regional approach rather than reliance on a single funding partner.

Impacts to Council Goals and Strategic Planning Priorities:

Year-round air service supports Strategic Planning Objective 2.4 Collaborate with Regional Partners.

Budget Impacts:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action. This agenda item is intended solely to determine whether the City Council wishes staff to continue participating in regional discussions and explore potential opportunities. Any future request involving City funding would be brought before the City Council for separate consideration as part of a future agenda item.

Legal Review:

There is no legal review for this discussion item.

Recommended Action:

Provide direction to staff regarding whether the City Council is interested in exploring potential opportunities for the City of Bishop to participate in regional discussions related to funding year-round commercial air service at the Eastern Sierra Regional Airport. No funding commitment or budget action is requested at this time.

Approved By: Pam Foster 7/9/2026

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