



Agenda Item: 15.B
Date of Meeting: August 24, 2026
Department: Administration

STAFF REPORT

To: City Council
From: Pam Foster
Subject: **Consideration of City Participation in Supporting Year-Round Commercial Air Service at the Eastern Sierra Regional Airport**
Prepared On: August 17, 2026

Background/History:

The Eastern Sierra Regional Airport provides an important transportation connection for the Eastern Sierra and supports residents, businesses, visitors, and the broader regional economy.

Staff recently participated in a regional discussion regarding the future of commercial air service at the airport. During that discussion, it was reported that United Airlines is offering the opportunity to extend its existing seasonal service between the Eastern Sierra Regional Airport and San Francisco to year-round service.

The proposed expansion would require approximately \$200,000 in additional annual subsidy from local and regional partners. The Mammoth Lakes Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) has historically provided significant financial support for air service; however, representatives indicated that the TBID may be approaching the limits of its ability to provide additional funding.

Regional air service partners are therefore actively seeking additional public and private partners to collectively close the approximately \$200,000 funding gap.

Analysis/Discussion:

Following the initial regional discussion, City staff has met with representatives of the regional air service partners to better understand the opportunity, the funding need, and the potential benefits of year-round service. Staff has also met with representatives of the Bishop Visitors Center/Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce regarding the opportunity and its potential economic benefits to the Bishop community.

Based on these discussions, staff and the Bishop Visitors Center/Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce recommend that the City participate in the regional effort to secure year-round air service.

Year-round service to San Francisco would provide additional connectivity for Bishop residents and businesses while improving access to the Eastern Sierra for visitors and business travelers. Reliable commercial air service can also support economic development, workforce recruitment and retention, and the ability of local businesses to connect with markets outside the region.

Staff is recommending that the City contribute \$35,000 annually toward the subsidy required to establish year-round service.

The Bishop Visitors Center/Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce Board has separately approved a \$15,000 contribution from the Bishop Tourism Improvement District (BTID) toward the air service subsidy.

Together, these commitments would provide \$50,000 in local funding toward the additional air service subsidy:

The regional air service partners are continuing to seek contributions from additional agencies, organizations, and potential private partners to collectively address the remaining funding need. The proposed City contribution would therefore be one component of a broader regional funding effort.

Staff believes participation in this effort is consistent with the City's interest in supporting economic development, regional connectivity, and access to transportation infrastructure that benefits the Bishop community.

Impacts to Council Goals and Strategic Planning Priorities:

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

Budget Impacts:

The proposed action would result in an annual City contribution of \$35,000 toward the regional air service subsidy.

Funding for the contribution would be provided from a change in the annual contract with the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Center from \$85,000 to \$50,000.

Legal Review:

Attorney Pucci has reviewed this item and finds it complies with the law.

Recommended Action:

Authorize the City of Bishop to participate in the regional effort to secure year-round United Airlines service between the Eastern Sierra Regional Airport and San Francisco through a \$35,000 annual contribution toward the air service subsidy, funded through a reallocation of the City's existing \$85,000 annual services agreement.

Approved By: Ethan Aukee 8/17/2026

Approved By: Alison Bishop 8/17/2026

Approved By:

Approved By: