

Airport's businesses, aviation flying high



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The Walla Walla Regional Airport's two major lines of business are aviation and the business park. Both produced solid results in 2015.

At the airport business park, the occupancy rate for existing buildings is well over 95 percent with quite a diversification of businesses and uses.

The business park has become an exciting and growing area for small businesses that include artist studios, a bakery, a brewery, carpentry and woodwork shops, hobby shops, a coffee shop, distilleries, entertainment venues, furniture/home goods, general business services and wineries.

These new businesses join the other long-standing and established businesses (agricultural, aviation, government, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and travel) that call the airport business park home.

An exciting addition to the airport business park in 2015 was Food Truck Night. Food Truck Night occurs on the first Monday evening of the month from April through October.

More than 20 local food truck vendors congregate on Piper Avenue, adjacent to the incubator buildings, to showcase their foods. Great attendance and support from the local community made this event an enjoyable evening.

On the aviation side, commercial passenger enplanements set another record in 2015 with 41,259 boardings on Alaska Airlines.

This represents a 13.7 percent increase from our previous record year in 2014 with 36,272 boardings.

Commercial passenger deplanements also set another record in 2015 with 41,277 passengers deplaning in Walla Walla.

This also represents a 13.7 percent increase from our previous record year in 2014 with 36,313 passengers deplaning.

Commercial passenger load factors, which is the percentage of seats filled for each flight, hit an all-time high of over 80 percent, an 8 percent increase over 2014.

This passenger load factor measurement is closely monitored by Alaska Airlines. In 2010, the passenger load factor was only 60 percent and Walla Walla was considered a marginal market for Alaska Airlines.

With the help from our business community, tourism activity and local citizens the Walla Walla Regional Airport is now a strong performing market for Alaska Airlines.

This increase speaks volumes to our community's commitment to preserve and grow air service particularly when you consider Walla Walla is one of the smallest markets Alaska Airlines serves.

Alaska Airlines has recognized the growth and success in Walla Walla and recently announced a third roundtrip flight. Beginning in March, Alaska will provide a three-flight schedule, five days per week to/from Seattle.

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The Port and the Walla Walla Air Service Coalition continue to advocate for a later arrival time into Walla Walla that will allow for greater connection possibilities from the East Coast.

Thank you for your support and flying Walla Walla whenever possible!