

Airport is a plus

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Amy Clickner , The Mining Journal

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Most people don't think twice about an airport. They want it to be there when they travel, they want to travel comfortably and safely and they want to pay a fair price. But there is so much more to an airport being successful in a community and I would be remiss if I didn't mention how critical it is for economic development.

Whether transporting products or people, tourists or business folks, clients or vendors, commercial or cargo, an available airport is critical in doing business. With that in mind, here are some facts about Sawyer International Airport that you should be aware of.

Sawyer International Airport currently maintains a 40 percent market share of passenger travel in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. In 2013, 83,799 passengers traveled through the airport, an increase of 10.26 percent over 2012. American Airlines and Delta Air Lines continue to remain cooperative with Sawyer and its future growth needs. Currently, the airport operates one American Airlines flight to Chicago, Sunday through Friday and one Delta Air Lines flight daily with an additional Sunday through Friday option.

Article Photos



Amy Clickner

There are six commercial airports in the Upper Peninsula. Sawyer has the most passengers of any U.P. airport. Houghton is the next highest at 25 percent and the rest is split between Sault Ste.

Marie, Escanaba, Iron Mountain and Ironwood. SIA is the only airport that does not receive Essential Air Service funding from the Department of Transportation.

Air cargo service is also important to our area. Air cargo is any freight or goods being transported via airplane. Federal Express transported 525,025 pounds of inbound cargo and 353,851 of outbound cargo and UPS transported 589,112 pounds of inbound cargo and 325,673 pounds of outbound cargo in 2013.

Sawyer is a critical link between Marquette General, Bell Hospital, their patients and their suppliers. The airport plays a big part in the timely delivery of key supplies and people in the health system including organs, visiting physicians, job candidates, specialists, special care patients, vital supplies and locally made devices.

Now let's look at the economic impact of this asset. Sawyer is a major catalyst to our regional economy. The total impact from airport activities includes: 990 local jobs; 1,068 state jobs; \$50,339,034 in local wages; \$48,791,775 in state wages; \$147,179,147 in local sales due to airport-related activities; and \$164,976,244 in state sales due to airport-related activities.

If this were a private sector business, it would be one of the top five employers in the county.

How can you support the retention and growth of our airport? I encourage everyone to fly out of Sawyer whenever possible. If there is a savings from flying from elsewhere, it is often erased from hotel costs, gas costs and time.

A few minutes of research when booking a flight can save money as well. Try changing departure or return time or date. Or you can alter routes via another hub. The more time saved by 'flying from nearby,' the more time allotted to spend at your destination.

A few other facts about Sawyer International Airport include: Michigan's longest runway at 12,370 ft - 10 of the largest planes in the world have landed at SIA; U.P.'s only control tower which provides another measure of safety for flight crews and passengers; Most airline seats of all U.P. airports; All passenger boarding bridges, meaning you never had to step outside in inclement weather; Twice hosted Air Force One, most recently in 2010 when President Barack Obama visited Marquette.

I hope you'll remember the importance of Sawyer International Airport on the Marquette County economy and 'fly from nearby.' For more information, visit www.sawyerairport.com.

Editor's note: Amy Clickner is CEO of the Lake Superior Community Partnership. Her twice-monthly column will address topics of interest to the local business community.

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