

PRESS RELEASE

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Chair, Grand Junction Regional Airport Authority Board

Airport Authority considers deal to land millions

Grand Junction, CO: A special board meeting of the Grand Junction Regional Airport Authority (Airport Authority) board of directors has been called for Tuesday, May 7, 2013. The board will discuss a proposal crafted by a public-private partnership that would accommodate a multi-million dollar expansion of West Star Aviation, Inc. (West Star).

In a move to enter the global general aviation market, West Star determined the need for additional paint and completions capacity to its product offerings. A business analysis determined that more than one of its base operations would be suitable for the expansion, and so a competitive bidding process with the host cities was initiated.

The Airport Authority collaborated with the Colorado Aeronautical Board and the Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP) to craft a proposal to respond to their needs. Included in the proposal is the construction of a new 45,500 square-foot hangar to house the new operations. An additional 48,900 square feet of existing airport space would be leased by West Star, including parts of its tower, which was recently vacated by the FAA due to sequestration.

West Star found that the Grand Junction proposal best suited their plan and awarded the bid to the airport in April 2013, pending the final approval of the Airport Authority's full board of directors. That meeting will be held at 8:30 am at City Hall.

If approved, the deal represents a significant economic impact to the Grand Valley. In addition to the new \$8 million hangar, up to 150 new jobs will potentially be created over the project's 5-year build out, including 40 jobs in the first year, at an average annual salary of \$52,000. The first year payroll increase is estimated to be over \$6 million, moving up slowly over the build out period to as much as \$100 million.

"We are rooting for smooth sailing of the proposal," said US Representative, Scott Tipton. "Innovative public-private collaborations like this one exemplify why Grand Junction and the state of Colorado are leaders in the general aviation industry. By working together, we can provide jobs and economic growth in the region."

Additional impact figures compiled by GJEP indicate that over the project build-out period the expansion will also deliver up to \$76 million in direct and indirect economic benefit to the local area, \$279 million to Mesa County, and \$273 million to the state of Colorado. Denny Granum, board chair of the Airport Authority and board member of GJEP stated, “This project represents more than money. It represents this community’s drive and ability to be responsive to the industry and to our valued employer, West Star Aviation. It signifies that we are a community of doers and innovators. Colorado is the number two aerospace economy in the nation. If the board finds in favor of this proposal, we will land a very nice piece of that pie.”

The expansion gives West Star customers the ability to have all of their aircraft service work done at a single facility, including airframe and engine, plus paint and completions. This level of service work may take weeks or even months to complete. The aircraft crew typically stays in the area to oversee the work, and owners drop in for status updates. This would expose the Grand Valley to over 1,000 new, and often well-heeled, aviation customers annually. “It took a very competitive package to win this bid,” said Bob Rasberry, CEO of West Star. “Western Colorado’s robust workforce, temperate climate, and recreational offerings helped us determine that Grand Junction was the ideal location, but the warm and welcoming people of the Grand Valley and our staff here have been big factors as well. We can be technically savvy, but delivering an exceptional experience takes a genuine spirit of hospitality and pride of ownership that feels natural to the people here.”

The Grand Junction Regional Airport has been home to West Star since 1952. In its 60-year history in Grand Junction, West Star has become one of the top aircraft maintenance facilities in the world. The corporation also operates facilities by the same name in six airports around the United States, including Grand Junction, Colorado (GJT); Aspen, Colorado (ASE); East Alton, Illinois (ALN); Dallas, Texas (DAL); Columbia, South Carolina (CAE); and Chesterfield, Missouri (SUS).

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