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Frontier to start 2 daily nonstop Denver flights

Service is first in deal with Republic

By Robert Schoenberger
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The Courier-Journal

Frontier Airlines will begin offering two daily nonstop flights serving Denver on April 1, adding a major Western route at Louisville International Airport.

"You can still catch the tail end of the skiing season," Frontier spokesman Joe Hodas said.



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Louisville has been working on getting direct flights to Denver for several years. A Greater Louisville Inc. survey shows there's demand by business travelers for the flights. Above: Frontier Airlines jetliners at Denver International Airport. (Associated Press file photo)

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Republic Airlines, which handles regional flights for Delta Air Lines, US Airways, American Airlines and United Airlines, will operate the Denver flights for Frontier.

Last week, Frontier and Republic announced a partnership that calls for Republic to handle 17 flights for Frontier. The Louisville-Denver service was the first to be announced from that partnership.

During a press conference at the airport yesterday, Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson said the city has been working on getting direct flights to Denver for several years. In 2003, he played host to Frontier Airlines executives at the Kentucky Derby in hopes of starting such service.

"It took too long," Abramson said. "We should have done it two or three years ago, but you finally got it right."

Tickets went on sale yesterday at Frontier's Web site, www.frontierairlines.com. Until Feb. 28, Frontier is offering one-way tickets to Denver for \$80 to promote the flights. Hodas said regular fares will be set sometime next month.

While Hodas said service will begin in April, many details need to be worked out. Frontier is negotiating with other airlines to share ticket-counter and gate space.

According to a survey by Greater Louisville Inc., business travelers want direct service to Denver. The survey found that 68 percent of employers need to travel to Denver, and 88 percent want better access to West Coast markets.

Joe Reagan, Greater Louisville Inc. president, said local travelers have had access to Denver and other Western cities for years through one-stop connecting flights. But he added that direct flights are very important for business fliers.

"In addition to the time saved, it's an important backup for other routes to the West," he said.

Reagan also said the Frontier decision was important for Louisville because with the airline adding 17 flights, if Louisville didn't get one, "it was going to go to a competitor city."



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Tickets went on sale yesterday at Frontier's Web site. One-way tickets to Denver are being offered for \$80, with regular fares to be set next month. (Will Powers/Associated Press)

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Republic will use two Embraer ERJ 170 regional jets on the Denver flights. Republic marketing vice president Warren Wilkinson said the 76-seat aircraft are more luxurious than most regional jets.

"This is a much larger aircraft than people are used to. It has a 6-foot, 7-inch cabin height. It has two lavatories and two galleys. The Frontier jets will have all leather seats. These aren't cramped planes."

Wilkinson added that the planes' overhead bins can hold full-sized carry-on luggage.

Republic and US Airways are the only domestic airlines using ERJ 170s, said Embraer spokesman Pedro Ferraz. US Airways said it does not use the planes in Louisville.

Next month, Republic is scheduled to start flying one United route per day to Chicago that uses an ERJ 170, Wilkinson said.

Reporter Robert Schoenberger can be reached at (502) 582-4669.

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