

Cascade to increase flights, expand routes

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Expanded routes and additional airplanes will bring better transportation service and a larger payroll into the Walla Walla area, a Cascade Airlines official says.

Mark Nilson, director of sales and passenger services for the seven-year-old commuter airline, says Cascade will increase its seating availability by 25 per cent June 1.

That will come through an addition of two Beechcraft 99's to the airline's present fleet of six and new scheduling of flights.

Seven pilots will be added to

Cascade's current roster of 39, all but eight of whom are based in Walla Walla.

In addition to the pilots and augmented Cascade personnel at the Walla Walla City-County Airport, where the airline will maintain seven of its planes, Walla Wallans will also have access to added round-trip flights to Portland and Spokane.

Cascade has also proposed new service between Lewiston and Boise, which would take effect Aug. 1, if approved by Idaho officials.

That would give the Blue Mountain country a link to southern Idaho via Cascade's Walla Walla-Lewiston

flights.

No increase in rates will accompany these changes, Nilson says.

In fact, Cascade hopes to complete joint-fare arrangements with other airlines that would lower interline costs to all U.S. points.

Nilson says those plans may be completed within a month.

The company also has announced some long-term hopes of converting from a commuter airline into a full-fledged certificated carrier.

Nilson says an application to the Civil Aeronautics Board is being prepared by Cascade that would grant the airline limited certification.

If approved, certification would make Cascade eligible for government-guaranteed loans to finance purchase of new equipment.

Nilson says the CAB application will be built around a fleet of 19-passenger Metro airplanes with pressurized cabins.

The 15-passenger Beechcraft 99 is equipped with an unpressurized cabin.

A decision on Cascade's application for limited certification is expected within a year.

Nilson says the airline's expansion plans stem from a steady increase in ticket sales during recent years.

For instance, when Cascade began its Walla Walla operations in November 1971 the airline carried between 200 and 300 passengers a month from here, according to Nilson.

Now the airline sells between 1,200 and 1,400 tickets for Walla Walla flights each month.

Nilson estimates that figure could rise as high as 1,800 under the new schedule, with 16 incoming and 16 outgoing flights a day except Saturday.

Walla Walla flights to Seattle that have been routed through Pullman in

the past will stop over in the Tri-Cities or Yakima beginning June 1.

That should increase seat availability for Walla Wallans, since ticket competition from Pullman customers sometimes crowded out local would-be passengers, Nilson said.

An additional Seattle-Walla Walla flight with a 1:40 p.m. departure time will also be initiated June 1.

Cascade Airlines has its headquarters in Spokane and operates in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.