

Cascade seeks north-south route

By KEVIN ROCHE

Lewiston Morning Tribune

Cascade Airways, Inc., plans to initiate daily flights between Pullman-Moscow, Lewiston and Boise this August, the Lewiston Morning Tribune learned Tuesday.

Hughes Airwest is the only Lewiston-Boise carrier at present.

Cascade President Mark Chestnutt of Spokane confirmed rumors that his company would offer three daily flights between the three cities.

"That's what we're considering," he said, "but we haven't firmed our plans up. It's really in the formative stages."

Chestnutt said he has been in contact with the Idaho Public Utilities Commission at Boise and intends to file an application for the north-south route within a few weeks. He also confirmed reports that Cascade had considered coinciding the Boise flights with expanded trips into southeastern Idaho by Key Airlines of Salt Lake City, which now serves Boise and Sun Valley. That

plan has been scrapped.

The Cascade service to Boise would be a reinstatement of a previous schedule with the addition of a Lewiston stop. Cascade had three flights daily between Pullman-Moscow airport and Boise several years ago, then cut back to two trips daily before ending service Jan. 1, 1976.

"We've been planning to reinstate the Boise flight ever since we discontinued it," Chestnutt told the Tribune. Cascade's fleet of Beech 99 planes will be expanded by two, he added.

Since the new Cascade route would include a stop at Lewiston, the service becomes intra-state and the PUC must approve the proposal.

Chestnutt said he had spoken with Key Airlines officials about coordinating statewide service between the two companies. But Chestnutt added the planned schedule would make connections at Boise with United, Hughes Airwest and Key flights.

Brent Wiseman, director of sales and

service for Key Airlines at Salt Lake City, said Tuesday his company originally considered reaching into northern Idaho itself. The broadened flight schedule would have included southern Idaho cities as well as Lewiston and Pullman-Moscow.

"But things have changed in the past few weeks," Wiseman told the Tribune. With Cascade moving into the north-south market again, he explained, Key Airlines has deferred any possible expansions at least until the fall. Direct tie-ins with Cascade service also has been set aside.

Cascade, with its intended Palouse-Lewiston-Boise route, is cruising back into a transportation corridor that has drawn the covetous eyes of the still-grounded Gem State Airlines of Coeur d'Alene for more than two years. But Chestnutt denied the Gem State campaign toward statewide air service had

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anything to do with Cascade's new plans.

"Gem State isn't an airline as far as I'm concerned," he commented. Chestnutt discarded any notion of serving Coeur d'Alene, as Gem State is planning to do. "It's too close to a large airport (at Spokane) and is not accessible."

For its part, Gem State remains undaunted by the Cascade design on a north-south route.

"Cascade was not a consideration when we put our application in," declared Gem State President Thomas Soumas Jr. He does not see the announced Cascade application for a similar air route as a cross-block to his company's program.

"I don't see two carriers on the same route," Soumas said, noting that it is simply speculation at this point as Cascade has not filed anything with the PUC.

Would Cascade's application affect Gem State's? "I don't see how. That's up to the PUC. I've worked on this thing for 2½ years. We see no reason to stop now. I'm not going to close the office up here because somebody made an application."

Garth Andrews, public information officer with the PUC at Boise, said that more than one application has been received in the past for other air routes.

"We would have to look at each

application on its merits and according to the public need," he told the Tribune. The two main factors used to decide on applications are the demand for the service and "who's best able to provide it."

If a second application for the same route were received, Andrews continued, the commission first would decide whether to consider the filings together or separately. He indicated Gem State's application — filed March 8 — might be delayed if both are considered at once.

Gem State's proposal would serve not only Boise and the northern cities but also southeastern Idaho. The PUC has yet to set a hearing date on the Gem State proposal.