

CHAPTER 2.0

PURPOSE AND NEED

2.1 PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION

FAA's proposed Federal action consists of approval of the proposed amendment to operations specifications for United Airlines to permit scheduled commercial air service to MMH using the CRJ700 aircraft pursuant to 14 CFR Part 119.

2.2 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION

The Federal purpose of FAA's proposed Federal action is to evaluate a request from United Airlines for the FAA to issue an Operations Specifications Amendment to allow scheduled commercial air service to the Mammoth Yosemite Airport.

FAA's primary mission is to ensure safety and efficiency in air commerce. One of the multiple mechanisms the FAA employs in fulfilling this mission is the issuance of operations specifications to commercial air carriers. United Airlines has requested an amendment to its operations specifications, and therefore FAA has a need to evaluate the requested Operations Specifications Amendment to determine that safety in air commerce allows the amendment, pursuant to 14 CFR Section 119.51.

49 U.S. Code Section 40101, Paragraph (a)(12), establishes as part of FAA policy "encouraging, developing, and maintaining an air transportation system relying on actual and potential competition -- to provide efficiency, innovation, and low prices; and to decide on the variety and quality of, and determine prices for, air transportation services. "

During the 2008-2009 winter season Horizon Air operated 110 flights between LAX and MMH utilizing the Bombardier Q400 Dash 8 aircraft. Total enplanements for the period were 5,148. During this period 62 percent of available passenger seats were occupied. For the 2009-2010 winter season Horizon Air expanded their service to include four flights per day for 115 days from mid-December 2009 to mid-April 2010. During this period service included two flights per day between MMH and LAX, and one flight per day between MMH and both Reno (RNO) and San Jose (SJC). Horizon Air has agreed to initiate summer service in April 2010 with one flight per day between MMH and LAX for 202 days over a period extending from mid-April 2010 to mid-December 2010.

Mammoth Lakes is a tourist destination. The local economy is largely driven by the numbers of visitors to the Town and region seeking a variety of recreational opportunities. While the Town's amenities and lodging are heavily used on the weekends, the mid-week period is often underutilized. Research by the Mammoth Lakes Tourism and Recreation Department has confirmed that the introduction of air service by Horizon Air has brought visitors to the area staying for longer periods including the mid-week periods. Recent survey results included in Appendix A-1 indicate that 57 percent of air passengers stayed 3-4 nights, 14 percent stayed 5-6 nights, and 12 percent stayed 7 or more nights.

The Town sees the proposed scheduled commercial air service using turbojet aircraft by United Airlines as a means to attract additional tourists that would more likely stay beyond a weekend, increase competition, and expand the number of locations from which visitors would be able to fly to MMH. United Airlines has indicated a willingness to provide the proposed service. This combination of factors demonstrates the need for scheduled commercial air service into MMH.