

Flying the Friendly Skies

Phase II of the Telluride airport remodel has been completed and locals and tourists alike are again “flying the friendly skies” in and out of Telluride.

The Telluride airport is currently able to offer services to the same type of planes as previous to Phase II. Having had removed the dip in the center of the airstrip by raising it 30 feet and bringing down the grades of the east (16 feet) and west (30 feet), now giving a smoother take-off and landing on an FAA approved strip.

The completion of Phase III to the Telluride airport will expand the safety areas to the east end of the strip, like the west end was in Phase II, allowing for safety vehicles if necessary and add EMASS, an engineered material arresting system. The new technology and engineered surface will allow the Bombardier Q400, a larger propeller aircraft, to be able to service our area in the future.

Considering the Telluride airport is operated solely on a business-based revenue, they are hoping for another grant from the FAA to complete Phase III. Ed Roufa stated, “The completion of Phase III bodes well for the future of the Telluride region.” Although the airport will still have a couple of tasks to check off of its list such as, obtaining the D3 designation and having a carrier that operates the Bombardier Q400 before a larger aircraft can service our area. Ed also stated that, at this point “greater safety, not necessarily larger planes” is more important for our travelers.

Currently, there are four commercial flights a day; two US Airways to Phoenix and two Great Lakes to Denver that fly in and out of Telluride.

With the airport open again and allowing private and chartered planes direct access to Telluride, we again are back in competing with similar Rocky Mountain resort destinations (i.e. Aspen, Vail, Jackson Hole) for higher-end tourism. Accessibility and ease of travel are necessary for a bulk of our visitors that help keep our economy sustainable.

We have just witnessed Telluride without an airport, and I am sure I can speak for most of everyone else, we are thankful for it to be up and functioning again.

Kiplynn Smith, President-Elect of the Telluride Association of REALTORS®