



St. Louis airport plans to install wireless network

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ST. LOUIS (AP) - Lambert-St. Louis International Airport plans to have a wireless network installed by next year, joining a growing number of the nation's airports that are installing the technology.

Business market manager Brian Kinsey said the airport is completing a bidding process and the network could be running by next spring. The chosen operator will pay for the network's construction, but the airport would own it. The network would allow travelers to wirelessly connect their computers or portable digital devices to the Internet.

Kinsey said the airport is relying on bidders to propose terms that would generate revenue from the network.

Among those bidding on the contract is Chicago-based **Concourse Communications** Group LLC, which builds and operates wireless voice and data networks at Kansas City International, LaGuardia in New York, the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport and several other airports.

Joe Beatty, Concourse's chief executive, said Wi-Fi traffic at airports serviced by his company is growing at a rate of about 15 percent per month. The Minneapolis-St. Paul network logs 8,000 sessions a month and charges a fee of \$6.95 for a 24-hour period, payable by credit card.

"These networks are zero risk for the airport," Beatty said. "They provide an amenity for the traveler while the provider pays for the network and gives a share of the revenue to the airport."

Finding new sources of revenue is important at Lambert-St. Louis, where the increasing popularity of cell phones has eroded millions of dollars in income from pay telephone concessions.

According to SBC Missouri, pay phones that generated \$4.2 million gross receipts for the airport in 1999 brought in just \$247,983 in the fiscal year ending June 30.

Airport Director Leonard Griggs told Airport Commissioners at a monthly meeting this week that the airport's finances are still in good shape, despite American Airlines' decision last year to cut more than 200 flights from its St. Louis schedule.

Lambert-St. Louis plans to cut its pay phones from 498 to 300. Its latest pay-phone contract gives the airport minimum annual guarantees of \$114,000 and \$104,000 in the next two years.

Information from: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, <http://www.stltoday.com>