New flight plan

Lincoln Airport will likely need to shift focus to attract airlines, passengers

The Lincoln Airport has taken its licks this century, with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Great Recession, and COVID-19 all compounding to blunt momentum and set its growth back years at a time.

Each time it has bounced back, regaining most, but not all of its passenger traffic within a few years.

But now the airport is faced with a double whammy. Not only did the pandemic greatly decrease its passenger traffic, just as things were starting to look up again, it was dealt another blow: the company lost service from Delta Airlines.

This airline, which serves Lincoln for decades, flew its last flight to Minneapolis in early January. That leaves the airport with just one airline, United Airlines, and the same number as Kearney Regional Airport, which also has service to Chicago and Denver on United.

Despite that major setback, airport Executive Director Dave Haring said he remains optimistic that things will rebound again, though it likely will mean changing the airport’s focus when it comes to attracting air service.

Lincoln Airport passengers

In 2019, the airport had nearly 100,000 passengers, which was its largest yearly total since 2007. In 2020, passenger numbers plunged to just over 100,000, while they grew by about two-thirds last year, that still left them barely more than half of the 2019 numbers.

Shipping woes hit clean energy

Wind, solar industries face shortages and backlogs

The era of ever-cheaper clean power is over, giving a fresh job of uncertainty to global energy markets battered by one supply crisis after another.

Relentless price declines over the past decade made renewables the cheapest sources of electricity in much of the world. In the past year, though, prices for solar panels have surged more than 50%. Wind turbines are up 15%, and battery prices are rising for the first time ever.

As pandemic-induced supply chains continue to unjumble everything from cars to solar, green energy’s price shocks may not come as a surprise. But shipping backlogs and commodity shortages are coming at a particularly vulnerable moment for wind and solar.

After years of rapid advances in both technologies, entrenching them, there are fewer opportunities left to cut costs without sacrificing profits. Instead of perpetually falling, prices will now shift and flow based on the cost of new materials and other market forces. For energy markets grappling with blackouts and extreme price volatility in the green transition, clean-power inflation is an other wild card.

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