

By Chris Walsh, Rocky Mountain News  
April 20, 2006

**PORTLAND** - Forget the cocktail parties, dinners with hall of fame quarterbacks and trips overseas, this city is luring a host of international flights with simply the facts.

In the past three years, Portland International Airport has lured nonstop flights to Tokyo and Frankfurt, Germany, by working closely with the business community, intensely researching the viability of different overseas routes and aggressively courting airlines.

"The way we did it was really through trench warfare and really hard work," Bill Wyatt, executive director of the Port of Portland, which oversees the airport, general aviation and marine ports in the area, told a group of Denver government, airport and business leaders here Wednesday. "It wasn't easy, and we had to help convince the airlines that they could make a buck here."

More than 30 Denver-area officials are visiting Portland this week to learn more about the city's airport and transportation network as Denver seeks to expand its rail and bus system.

Home to Nike's headquarters and large Intel Corp. operations, Portland was able to demonstrate that it could generate strong demand for business travel to Tokyo and Frankfurt, helping the city regain some international air service that it lost in early 2001.

"We really found that the public and private sectors must be working together," said Sho Dozono, president of Azumano Travel, which works closely with the Port of Portland to boost international service.

The city invested tens of thousands of dollars to obtain and analyze data on different routes in a quest to figure out which ones could generate ample demand. The goal: gather data to make a compelling case to airlines.

"We said 'let's not pitch service if we can't look (the airline) in the eye and tell them they have a reasonable chance to make a profit,' " Wyatt said. "It's very important to know your market very well."

Denver International Airport, one of the nation's busiest airports, has numerous flights to Mexico and Canada but offers nonstop service to only two overseas destinations. It has made luring more overseas flights - particularly to Tokyo and Munich, Germany - a big focus in recent years.

DIA has offered \$1 million in incentives to the first airline to begin the service, and elected officials have made trips overseas.

"It's vital for businesses to support our international flights," said Sally Covington, deputy manager of aviation, public relations and marketing. "It's particularly important that they continue to support service after it starts. If an airline ends international service here, then it becomes harder to get it in the future."