1989 revenue soars at BR airport

By JOHN PORRETTO

Business at Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport took off in 1989, with year-end figures showing an increase in boardings, food and drink concessions and on-site car rentals.

Even the airport's gift shop and public parking lot generated more money in 1989 than the year before, the figures show.

Boardings on commercial airline flights totaled 429,407 passengers, an 8 percent increase over 1988.

"In this day and time, to have an increase of that amount is very good," said airport aviation director Iray Ledoux, who released the figures this week during a meeting of the Greater Baton Rouge Airport District Commission.

According to the year-end figures, three of the four national airlines that service Metro Airport reported increased passenger boardings last year.

Delta had a 13 percent increase; American, 11 percent; and Continental, 4 percent. Northwest had 7 percent fewer passengers leave Baton Rouge in 1989 than the year before, the figures show.

Food and drink receipts in 1989 totaled more than $1.3 million, a 14 percent increase over 1988. In addition, on-site car rentals increased 13 percent and gift shop and public parking sales each rose 4 percent.

"All in all, in terms of revenue and passengers, we have had a fairly good year here," Ledoux told commission members.

During a meeting Tuesday, the board approved a change order on an ongoing runway extension project at the airport and then approved final acceptance of the project.

Included in the change order is a 52-day extension to Barber Brothers Contracting Co. Inc., which is handling the 1,200-foot extension project.

The final projected cost for the extension is more than $1,879,000 - about $62,000 less than the original contract amount.

In other action, the commission voted on two substitute motions and then decided to refer to its executive committee an item concerning an independent marketing plan for the airport.

The item, which was requested by Commission James T. Benham, asks for authorization to seek proposals for an independent marketing plan for the airport. The plan would go into effect sometime this spring upon completion of a 20-year master plan study at the airport.

Benham argued that such a marketing plan is needed "for further development of activity at the airport."

The master plan study has nothing to do with marketing and the commission needs to "get the ball rolling if we're going to do marketing," Benham said.

Commissioner Joe M. Stablier Sr. said seeking proposals for an independent marketing plan before the master plan is complete would be a waste of time and money.

"I don't think we can get a marketing firm to market something if they don't know what they're selling," Stablier said.

Commissioner Walter Monsour and Stablier offered substitute motions, but both motions were rejected.

The commission finally referred the matter to its executive committee, which will meet next on Jan. 17 at 10 a.m.