



North Dakota Legislative Council

Prepared for the Government Finance Committee
 LC# 25.9314.01000
 September 2024

AIR TRANSPORTATION SURVEY RESULTS

This memorandum summarizes the results of a survey of state agencies' use of contracted air transportation services and anticipated need for air transportation services. Air transportation services provided by agency's own aircraft and regularly scheduled commercial airline travel were excluded from this survey. The survey did not include the institutions under the control of the State Board of Higher Education.

USE OF STATE CONTRACT FOR AIR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The state had a contract from 2017 to 2022 for air transportation services with Aberdeen Flying Service, Bismarck Air Medical, and Executive Air Taxi Corporation. Based on the results of the survey, the Public Service Commission was the only state agency to use the state contract for air transportation services. The schedule below summarizes the commission's use of the state contract for air transportation services in the 2017-19, 2019-21, and 2021-23 bienniums. The commission used the state contract for air transportation services for in-state travel when the Department of Transportation aircraft were unavailable or didn't serve the commission's needs related to mine flyovers.

Biennium	Total number of trips	Total number of passengers	Total Cost
2017-19	3	11	\$3,847
2019-21	2	4	\$1,716
2021-23	2	4	\$2,035

ANTICIPATED IN-STATE NEEDS FOR AIR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The schedule below summarizes state agencies' anticipated in-state needs for air transportation services based on the results of the survey. State agencies anticipate using in-state air transportation services for 177 trips per biennium with an average of three passengers per trip and a maximum of seven passengers per trip.

Agency	Average passengers per trip	Maximum passengers per trip	Number of trips per biennium
101 - Governor	3	7	80 ¹
125 - Attorney General	2	4	72
408 - Public Service Commission	6	7	10
471 - Bank of North Dakota	2	4	4
601 - Department of Commerce	2	6	1
602 - Agriculture Commissioner	6	6	4
720 - Game and Fish Department	7	7	6

¹The Governor's office reported a range of 65 to 80 trips per biennium, but the amount shown reflects the maximum number of trips.

ANTICIPATED OUT-OF-STATE NEEDS FOR AIR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The schedule below summarizes state agencies' anticipated out-of-state needs for air transportation services based on the results of the survey. State agencies anticipate using out-of-state air transportation services for seven trips per biennium with an average of four passengers per trip and a maximum of seven passengers per trip.

Agency	Average passengers per trip	Maximum passengers per trip	Number of trips per biennium
101 - Governor	3	6	4
471 - Bank of North Dakota	4	6	2
602 - Agriculture Commissioner	7	7	1

AGENCY COMMENTS

The survey allowed state agencies to provide comments regarding air transportation services, and the schedule below includes the comments submitted by agencies.

Agency	Comments
101 - Governor	Air transportation service is critical for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to meet the appearance requests of the citizens that come from every corner of the state. Having a plane that could land in more of our state's airports would be extremely helpful and efficient.
125 - Attorney General	The Attorney General's office duties require extensive travel throughout the state. The use of the state plane is cost prohibitive in most instances as we do not fill the plane to capacity. The Attorney General's office is in favor of establishing an aircraft pool operated by the state to include aircraft of various sizes that can accommodate the required number of passengers.
180 - Judicial Branch	Since the start of the 2017-19 biennium until today, the court system has used the Department of Transportation aircraft for two in-state flights. It is very occasional when there is a need for contracted air transportation services, but the court system has primarily always used the Department of Transportation aircraft.
405 - Industrial Commission	The Industrial Commission does not utilize the Department of Transportation services for air transportation. Occasionally (typically once per year), commission members will join the Governor on a flight to an offsite meeting. However, those costs are covered by the Governor's office.
601 - Department of Commerce	While the Department of Commerce has been able to utilize the state plane resources on multiple occasions in order to boost productivity, it is the department's opinion that having two identical state aircraft that serve the same mission set leaves opportunity for improvement. Travel within the state is highly efficient with the existing aircraft that are in place, but in instances where longer travel is necessary, the current options fall short. Long travel times, multiple refueling stops, and runway limitations mean that there are several instances where a state plane asset with a different speed, range, and runway requirement would have served as valuable. However, given the current fleet available, several trips were avoided altogether or multiple commercial airline tickets, hotel rooms, and multiple days of travel were pursued instead. It is the department's opinion that one state aircraft designed for efficient in-state travel, and one state aircraft designed for longer distance travel would be valuable in order to increase the mission scope that the state aircraft could serve.
602 - Agriculture Commissioner	Currently, the state plane is affordable for groups of individuals going to various locations. For example, with the E-Tour the department takes Environmental Protection Agency employees annually to show the prairie pothole system in North Dakota to reveal why pesticides are necessary around environmentally sensitive areas and to demonstrate how technology and agricultural producers can use and comply with current label regulations.
701 - State Historical Society	With headquarters based in Bismarck and operations near Williston, Fargo, and Pembina, if we could prove it was more economically efficient to move staff by air, we may very well take advantage of such a service.
770 - Department of Water Resources	The Department of Water Resources, having regulatory and other responsibilities throughout the state, could see benefit to our team members time and ability to respond where needed in the state. Due to the cost of use and available budget, air transportation services provided by the Department of Transportation are not an option.