



The voice of Siouxland. Print, online and mobile.

Sioux City Journal

Founded in 1864

Sunday, November 2, 2025

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

siouxcityjournal.com

SIoux GATEWAY AIRPORT

SMALL AIRPORTS BRACE FOR LOSS OF EAS FUNDS



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL, FILE

A Skywest Airlines flight taxis to the terminal at Sioux Gateway Airport in this August 2022 file photo. Funding for the Essential Air Service program, which helps subsidizes commercial flights at smaller airports like Sioux Gateway, is set to dry up on Nov. 18.



MARIA KUIPER, WATERLOO-CEDAR FALLS COURIER

TSA officer Thomas Keeling places luggage into a new baggage checking system on Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023, at the Waterloo Regional Airport.

Shutdown threatens program that subsidizes flights at Sioux Gateway

MAYA MARCHEL HOFF
Lee-Gazette Des Moines Bureau

As the government shutdown nears the one-month mark, Sioux Gateway Airport and other smaller Iowa airports are paying close attention to what may happen with an essential source of federal funds set to lapse in the middle of next month.

Funding for the Essential Air Service program, which five airports, including Sioux Gateway, rely on to help subsidize flights to larger airports that would otherwise be unprofitable for airline carriers, is set to dry up on Nov. 18.

The EAS program launched in 1978 after Congress deregulated the airline industry. It awards about \$600 million in contracts to more than 170 small airports annually. In 2025, the program provided nearly \$34 million across the five Iowa airports.

Since the government shut down earlier this month, EAS funding was set to lapse twice, including on Nov. 2. The U.S. Department of Transportation has extended program funding twice — once on Oct. 8 and again on Oct. 29.

“The Department will continue to closely monitor the availability of budgetary resources as November 18, 2025, approaches and will provide further updates as needed if the lapse in appropriations continues,” a U.S. DOT memo released Wednesday states.

While EAS funding is guaranteed through mid-November, rural Iowa airports are still bracing for a situation where their commercial carriers have to cancel flights if there is a funding lapse.

Flights in and out of rural airports aren’t profitable, so EAS is an incentive to ensure they fly to these Iowa cities, said Iowa Department of Transportation Aviation Director Tim McClung.

“Airlines need to serve routes that are sustainable and that are profitable, as much as I think they’d like to, and we’d all like them to, they’re not going to come and serve a market if it’s not consistent and it’s not profitable for them,” McClung said.

Sioux City’s interim City Manager Mike Collett said the Sioux Gateway Airport, which offers daily flights to Chicago and Denver, has not yet seen any impacts from the approaching EAS funding lapse. Collett said the funding provides a commercial service that the airport otherwise wouldn’t have.

“It’s an essential part of what we do, and we rely on that program,” Collett said.

Skywest Airlines provides flights to passengers flying in and out of Sioux Gateway, the Mason City Municipal Airport and Fort Dodge Regional Airport.

“We are working with each community and evaluating our capabilities in the event of a longer-term government shutdown,” Skywest said in a provided statement. “It is our intent to honor our service commitments, including those under the Federal EAS program who rely on SkyWest’s reliable air service as an essential economic lifeline.”

Mason City Municipal Airport Man-

Please see AIRPORTS, Page A2

\$54 million went to impacted Iowans

ERIN MURPHY
Gazette-Lee Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — Nearly \$54 million has been invested in disaster relief programs established to help Iowans impacted by 2024’s devastating floods and hurricanes, aiding nearly 800 housing units or families, according to state data requested by The Gazette.

More than 5,000 Iowa homes were impacted by natural disasters in 2024 — roughly 2,000 of which were destroyed — primarily by flooding in Northwest Iowa and tornadoes in Southwest Iowa.

Background

Housing was already an issue in Iowa before 2024’s natural disasters exacerbated the problem.

Iowa experienced a record 125 tornadoes in 2024, 98 of which occurred in April and May, according to the National Weather Service. Tornadoes in Minden on April 26 and Greenfield on May 21 resulted in the deaths of six Iowans.

More than 200 Iowa homes were destroyed by one round of tornadoes in May, including 153 just in Greenfield, according to the state. The tornado in Minden destroyed 48 homes and damaged several dozen more in the town of just roughly 600, according to the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors.

And flash floods were produced in Northwest Iowa — most significantly in Sioux, Clay, Buena Vista, Cherokee and Lyon counties — in late June, when in some areas a year’s worth of rainfall fell over three days, according to the National Weather Service. Three people were killed and more than 300 homes and businesses were destroyed by the flooding, according to NWS.

In response to the multiple natural

Please see RELIEF, Page A2

Bird urges federal probe into refinery exemptions

Iowa Biodiesel Board warns of losses, urges EPA action

LEE-GAZETTE DES MOINES BUREAU

Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird has asked the U.S. Department of Justice and other federal agencies to investigate whether some oil companies are improperly benefiting from exemptions under the Renewable Fuel Standard program meant for small refiners facing economic hardship.

In a letter sent Wednesday to the Justice Department, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, and Securities and Exchange Commission, Bird said some refineries may be “gaming the system” to receive small refinery exemptions while simultaneously reporting strong profits to investors.

The RFS requires refiners to blend renewable fuels such as ethanol into their products or buy compliance credits. Bird said some companies appear to have manipulated production to remain under the 75,000-barrel-per-day cap that qualifies them for exemptions, and have made public filings touting record profits and stock buybacks — claims she said are inconsistent with assertions of financial hardship.

“Renewable fuels are part of the backbone of Iowa’s economy,” Bird said in a statement. “The possibility that refineries are gaming the system



Bird

Please see PROBE, Page A2