SPACEPORT COLORADO SUBMITTING FAA LICENSE APPLICATION THIS MONTH

News / Airlines

Spaceport Colorado intends to submit its **application** for a commercial spaceport license by the end of the **month** with the aim of securing approval in the second quarter of 2016, says air and spaceport director David Ruppel.

If successful, Spaceport Colorado can begin offering horizontal launch services in what is becoming an increasingly crowded market, with 10 US sites already approved by the **FAA**.

Ruppel says Spaceport Colorado “is alive and well,” but requires a license in order to attract significant interest from the commercial spaceflight industry.

The spaceport hopes to attract the types of operations imagined for XCOR’s Lynx, but also small satellite launch services and research and development projects.

The site will be a director competitor with Spaceport America in nearby New Mexico, but Ruppel says the two can coexists by specialising in different areas, since Spaceport America’s locality is preferred for experimental flights, while Spaceport Colorado’s proximity to Denver International Airport(DIA) makes it more accessible.

Ruppel says the closeness to DIA is a “blessing and a curse,” since it is the 18th busiest airport in the world and regulators will be taking a doubly close look at how commercial spaceflights and general air traffic will coexists.

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The proximity, though, also places the spaceport at the centre of an aerospace hub, with more than 400 aerospace companies located nearby.

Once the license application is submitted, the environmental impact assessment will be subject to a 30-day public comment period and then 180-day review period with the FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation.

There are currently no discussions about supplying commercial services to the US military, but those opportunities might come in the future. "They don't want to talk to anyone who doesn't actually have a license," says Ruppel.

He says the first launch opportunities could come in about five years as the first space vehicles are certified by the FAA.

In terms of the business case for another spaceport, Ruppel says there are currently more spaceports today than there is demand, but the groundwork must be laid now to capture market share once the industry takes flight.

"We can't wait until the need is there, we need to start now," he says. "There is a need that exists right now for cube satellites."

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