MONEY

Discovery wants to begin selling tickets immediately

By Greg Wiles
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Discovery Airways wants to start ticket sales before it obtains final U.S. Department of Transportation certification.

The airline yesterday made an emergency request to the department asking that it be allowed to issue tickets and take money immediately.

"The department must recognize that Discovery's ability to sell tickets is critical and its public image is harmed when prospective passengers are told they cannot buy tickets," the filing said.

The department allowed Discovery to advertise and take reservations when it gave the carrier conditional approval on Jan. 29. But it reserved allowing it to issue tickets and take money until Discovery satisfied certain conditions and obtained Federal Aviation Administration approval.

Discovery believes it has acted on the conditions and that FAA approval is forthcoming.

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>
> **— DISCOVERY AIRLINES**

It has scheduled March 1 for its inaugural flights.

The carrier said the emergency exemption is needed because it believes its competitive position is being "seriously threatened by the continued predatory marketing actions" of Aloha and Hawaiian.

It noted the two interisland carriers have reduced fares since it announced its introductory fare.

It said it will place any ticket sales money into an escrow account.

"The department has no further basis for withholding permission to sell tickets, and withholding this authority is not in the public interest," the filing said.

Discovery plans to start service with flights between Oahu and Maui or Kauai. It will offer free travel on its five jets March 1 and charge thereafter.

Aloha, Hawaiian, the Air Line Pilots Association and the International Association of Machinists have fought Discovery's certification, alleging it may be subject to foreign control. Its primary funding is coming from the subsidiary of a Japanese company.

The four have gone to a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., asking for a review of the Transportation Department's conditional approval of Discovery's operation.