



March 12, 2008

Docket Operations,
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building, Ground Floor, Rm W12-140, M-30
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS
2008 MAR 18 A 9:39

RE: Docket N. FAA-2008-0036, Policy Regarding Airport Rates and Charges

In reviewing the proposed amendments to the Department of Transportation's policy Regarding the Establishment of Airport Rates and Charges, published in the Federal Register on June 21, 1996, the Tri-Cities Airport Commission, TN/VA is strongly opposed to the amendment allowing certain airports to set fees in a way that would discourage air carriers from serving the airport with smaller aircraft.

While the Tri-Cities Airport Commission acknowledges the congestion problems some large hubs, such as Chicago O'Hare or New York La Guardia experience, the Commission feels that a better solution is to address the fundamental air traffic control issues.

For small markets, such as the Tri-Cities region of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia (Kingsport, Johnson City and Bristol), nonstop access to key business markets is critical for economic development and stability in a highly competitive world. Without easy access to these key markets, smaller communities are extremely disadvantaged.

The proposed policy clearly states (page 3311) that "a two-part fee would serve as an incentive for carriers to use larger aircraft and increase the number of passengers served with the same or fewer operations." Airline economics typically dictate the use of regional jets and smaller aircraft in smaller communities, and in this volatile economy it is already extremely difficult for smaller communities to gain nonstop service to cities such as Chicago and New York. If the large hubs are allowed to add an additional layer of cost penalizing carriers for using smaller aircraft, it will block virtually all small markets from gaining non-stop access to these key business centers—a situation that could be considered discriminatory for large segments of the population that live in smaller communities.

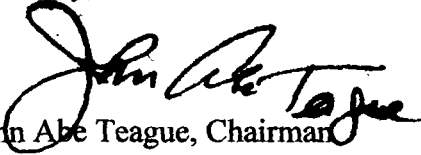
This amendment assumes that by raising airport landing fees, it will deter airlines from scheduling at certain "peak" periods at big airports. But at connecting hub airports, the "peaks" are connecting banks scheduled by the carriers to allow all communities to have viable air access to the world. Not only are small communities at risk of being completely blocked from "non-stop" access to key hubs, if successful, this amendment may very well artificially restrict small communities like TRI from having sufficient "connecting" access to international markets.



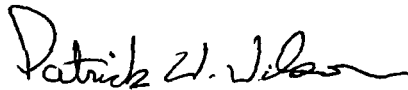
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The Tri-Cities Airport Commission strongly opposes the proposed amendment and would instead encourage the Department of Transportation to more directly address the extensive need to modernize the Air Traffic Control system so it can handle the nation's volume of air traffic without delays.

Sincerely,



John Abe Teague, Chairman
Tri-Cities Airport Commission
Tri-Cities Regional Airport, TN/VA (TRI)



Patrick Wilson, Executive Director
Tri-Cities Airport Commission
Tri-Cities Regional Airport, TN/VA (TRI)

C: Senator Lamar Alexander
Senator Bob Corker
Congressman David Davis
Congressman Rick Boucher
Tri-Cities Airport Commission