



**Wilkes-Barre/Scranton  
International  
Airport**

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
Docket # OST-97-2985

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*QA*

October 24, 1997

Ms. Paulette Twine  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Docket Branch  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street S.W., Room PL 401  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket #OST-97-2985 - *22*

Dear Ms. Twine:

On behalf of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airports' Bi-County Board of Commissioners I urge approval of the application, submitted on October 9, 1997, by Simmons Airlines, Inc., d.b.a. American Eagle, for an exemption from the high density rule governing Chicago O'Hare Int'l Airport. In the application, Simmons Airlines indicated it would initiate service from AVP to ORD with three non-stop jet flights per day.

The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport, a non hub airport, is presently served by US Airways, COMAIR the Delta Connection, US Airways Express and Continental Express. In the past, we have met with American Airlines and United Airlines requesting they provide service to Chicago O'Hare Int'l Airport. Our efforts were unsuccessful because of the restriction on slots at Chicago O'Hare. The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Market two years ago ranked as the second largest market east of the Mississippi without direct service to Chicago. Approval of Simmons Airlines application will provide our area travelers with another choice and our area business the ability to compete in the global market place.

Again, your favorable ruling for Simmons Airlines is strongly encouraged.

Sincerely,

*Barry J. Centini*  
Barry J. Centini  
Airport Director

BJC:mac

*3pg*

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October 24, 1997

The Honorable Rodney Slater  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 7th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: OST-97-2985

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce representing over 2600 businesses in Northeastern Pennsylvania supports American Eagle's (the regional airline partner of American Airlines) application for an exemption from the high-density slot rule to provide nonstop jet service from Chicago's O'Hare International Airport to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

The lack of direct airline accessibility to major hubs such as O'Hare International Airport has hampered our economic development initiatives in attracting corporate offices to our community.

Due to the nature of the ever-expanding global market place, accessibility to transportation infrastructure is of paramount importance to corporate decision makers. The direct link to O'Hare International Airport would provide us with a connection to the corporate community worldwide and in turn, level the playing field in attracting career sustaining jobs to our community.

The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce urges the Department of Transportation to use its exemption powers and promptly approve American Eagle's application to provide non-stop regional jet service from O'Hare International Airport to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport, a non-hub airport.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Austin J. Burke", is written over a horizontal line.

Austin J. Burke  
President

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10-14-97 PAGE A4

MHC  
JMC

Editorials

## Chicago service would help airport

**The airport still is suffering from the decision of Delta Airlines to halt jet service to Atlanta.**

**A**merican Eagle, the regional commuter airline affiliated with American Airlines, has filed a plan with the Department of Transportation that would fill a huge void at the Wilkes-Barre-Scranton International Airport.

The airport suffers from a lack of competition, service to major hubs and connections with major airlines. U.S. Airways provides direct jet service to connecting hubs in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and ComAir provides commuter jet service to the major Delta Airlines hub at Cincinnati.

American Eagle wants to establish three daily round-trip flights to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport from the local airport. That would provide competition that likely would produce better prices among other carriers, and provide local travelers with easy access to American Airlines.

The proposal is not a done deal. O'Hare is the nation's busiest airport and there are restrictions on new landing slots. According to American Eagle, however, the transportation department is considering exemptions to those restrictions for under-served markets such as Northeastern Pennsylvania.

American Eagle would fly new, 50-seat commuter jets on the route, which are similar to the commuter jets flown by ComAir.

Ideally, the airport would be able to attract more full-size jet service but the reality in the industry is that airlines are shifting to regional commuters to reduce costs. In fact, the question of whether pilots flying those planes would be paid comparably to pilots of larger craft was a principal issue in the short-lived strike by pilots against American Airlines earlier this year.

The airport still is suffering from the decision of Delta Airlines to halt jet service to Atlanta. If American Eagle can establish the Chicago service, local travelers again would have broader options.

Meanwhile, the airport still should consider a shift from direct governmental management to oversight by an industry council.