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BEFORE THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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| U.S. - COLOMBIA COMBINATION SERVICE PROCEEDING (2000) |))))) | Docket OST-2000-7655 - 3 |
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COMMENTS OF DELTA AIR LINES , INC.

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July 24, 2000

**BEFORE THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.
July 24, 2000**

**U.S. - COLOMBIA COMBINATION
SERVICE PROCEEDING (2000)**

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) **Docket OST-2000-7655**
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**COMMENTS OF
DELTA AIR LINES , INC.**

By Order 2000-7-19 the Department tentatively awarded Delta Air Lines, Inc. ("Delta") a certificate and seven U.S.-Colombia frequencies to establish nonstop service to Bogota, Colombia from Delta's highly successful Latin American hub gateway at Atlanta. Delta applauds the Department's tentative decision, which is the best public benefits maximizing result out of the two available choices.

In light of the restrictions on U.S.-Colombia services that have limited current U.S. flag services to just two incumbent carriers, the traveling public urgently needs viable new competitive options on a nationwide scale. Delta is uniquely positioned to provide that service.

The Department correctly recognized the importance of authorizing service from a major hub gateway in order to maximize the online service benefits of an award. Thus, not only will Delta's Atlanta-Bogota services provide Atlanta travelers their first and only nonstop service to Colombia, but

Comments of Delta Air Lines, Inc.

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Delta's new Colombia flight will provide an unprecedented number of new and competitive nonstop-to-nonstop connecting services to all areas of the country.

As the Department observed, there is vastly greater demand for Bogota service, than there is for travel to Cali.

Atlanta holds the undisputed title of "world's largest airline hub." From Atlanta, Delta and the Delta connection carriers offer some 900 daily flights to over 160 nonstop destinations. Consequently, more U.S.-Colombia passengers will have convenient competitive online service options than ever before.

The Department correctly recognized that Delta's large capacity B-757 proposal (with 48 percent more seats than Continental's competing proposal) coupled with the strategic attributes of Delta's Atlanta hub, will have a profound effect on improving the competitive market structure between the United States and Colombia. The Department "view[ed] these benefits as particularly significant and compelling in a market that has been artificially restricted for so many years." Order 2000-7-19 at 9.

The Department's decision to authorize Atlanta-Bogota service will add an important new destination to Delta's highly successful Latin American hub operation. Since launching its major Latin America initiative at Atlanta in 1998, Delta has rapidly built Atlanta into one of the premier hub gateways for service to Latin America. The addition of Atlanta-Bogota service, along with Delta's

announced service to Santiago later this year, will bring Delta Atlanta hub operation to a total of 217 weekly flights to 16 destinations in Latin America.

Finally, Delta agrees with the Department's determination to resolve this simple case using expedited procedures. Both applicants have had ample opportunity to present their cases and comment on the competing proposals in the contest of responsive pleadings. The submission of briefs and exhibits would contribute nothing that would change the fundamental public interest considerations supporting an award to Delta.

WHEREFORE, Delta urges the Department to promptly issue a Final Order confirming the tentative findings of the Show Cause Order.

Respectfully submitted,



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