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THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKET

November 14, 2002

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The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

~~Chuck:~~
Dear Senator Schumer:

Thank you for your letter of October 1 regarding subsidized air service under the Essential Air Service (EAS) program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation at the northern New York communities of Massena, Ogdensburg, and Watertown. You stated that you support the option of Mesa Airlines that would provide Massena and Ogdensburg with three round trips a day to Albany and would provide Watertown with three round trips a day to Pittsburgh.

The Department's staff is currently negotiating subsidy proposals from both Mesa and CommutAir for EAS in the North Country. However, since these negotiations have not yet been completed, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of any of Mesa's or CommutAir's particular options at this time. Let me assure you that, before making a final decision, the Department will thoroughly consider community views, as well as subsidy costs.

As is our normal practice in such matters, I am placing a copy of your letter and my response in Docket OST-1997-2842 as a contact outside the record of the case.

I will be happy to keep your office apprised of any major developments. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Y. Mineta'.

Norman Y. Mineta

CHARLES E. SCHUMER
--NEW YORK

COMMITTEES:
BANKING
JUDICIARY
RULES

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 1, 2002

The Honorable Norm Mineta
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Mineta:

The Department of Transportation is once again in the process of considering a number of proposals for critical air service to the New York cities of Massena, Ogdensburg and Watertown under the federally funded Essential Air Service (EAS) Program. I am writing today in support of one such proposal.

Officials from each city have reviewed the proposals from CommuteAir (Continental Connection) and Mesa (US Air) and have unanimously supported and endorsed a schedule from Mesa that would provide three round trip flights per day from Massena/Ogdensburg to Albany, NY and three daily round trip flights from Watertown to Pittsburgh, PA.

A recently completed survey by the Merwin Rural Services Institute at SUNY Potsdam as well as positive comment from university, business and community leaders and the general public have led local officials to believe that this particular Mesa proposal will best serve the needs of the North Country's flying public. The MESA proposal would provide better service than the schedule currently being subsidized by the EAS program and would require an EAS subsidy of \$1.77 million, a sum that is less than the subsidy of \$1.9 million going to the current provider.

The northern communities of New York have already lost thousands of local air travelers to Canadian airports in Montreal or Ottawa. This decrease continues to put state and federal grant eligibility for airport improvements at risk and negatively impacts the local economies. The Mesa proposal has energized area residents and businesses, and I am confident that it will benefit the entire area if it is adopted. It would allow the region to be more accessible and to foster business outside the area with local colleges and industries.

I urge your expeditious review and approval of this EAS proposal. If I can answer any questions or be of additional assistance with regard to this request, please call me.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator