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Docket OST-1997-2785
Civil Party Comments

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS

2003 MAR -11 P 2:57



March 28, 2003

Dennis J. DeVany, Chief
US Department of Transportation
EAS/Domestic Analysis Division - X53
Room 6417 I
400 7th Street SW
Washington DC 20590

RE: **DOCKET OST-1997 - 2785**
SERVED: MARCH 25, 2003

Dear Mr. DeVany:

The North Dakota Aeronautics Commission, in consultation with the airport managers of Devils Lake and Jamestown, filed this response to the above docket:

GOVERNOR
John Hoeven
State of North Dakota

STAFF
Gary R. Ness
Director

Roger L. Pfeiffer
Assistant Director

Mark J. Holzer
Aviation Planner

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Wahpeton

- 1) **Customer Base:** The North Dakota National Guard training facility at Camp Grafton, which is south of Devils Lake, has projected 3,000 plus students, from across the nation, for the next 12 months. The school schedules Friday afternoon arrivals and Saturday morning departures to accommodate the local carrier flight schedule. With that information we request DOT provide 14 round trips weekly. This would provide a service level that supports this most important customer base.
- 2) **Flight Schedules:** The early morning departure, as proposed in the Great Lakes schedule, requires adjustment. The DOT should request the selected carrier to consult with airport management and customer base on a schedule that would offer maximum MSP connections.
- 3) **Code share factor:** It is suggested that DOT investigate a selection of an airline with code-sharing and joint fares with a dominant carrier in the Minneapolis hub. Failure to do so creates airfare disparities for local travelers and discourages EAS ridership. Currently airfares are 40% higher for leisure and 20% higher for business travelers at the nearest competing airports. Without a major airline Computer Reservation System (CRS), access to this service by non-locals is restricted.
- 4) The DOT must monitor carrier reliability and performance. The local market perception holds the carrier in low regard. We suggest the DOT require the carrier to utilize the \$5,000 in the budget for marketing to overcome this perception.

The North Dakota Aeronautics Commission commends the DOT for the understanding of the local issues to improve the EAS service for Devils Lake and Jamestown citizens. EAS service to these cities provides national access for business, tourism, medical and personal reasons. Without the EAS program assistance, these communities would be severed from our national transportation system and isolated from the national economy. By negotiating these above 4 points, we are confident the ridership can recover.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Ness, Director

cc: Governor John Hoeven, State of North Dakota
Senator Byron Dorgan, US Senate
Senator Kent Conrad, US Senate
Representative Earl Pomeroy, US House of Representatives
Richard King, Jamestown Airport Manager
Ken Koehn, Devils Lake Airport Manager