

Correspondence

Docket 2784

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DOT/ST-100

Richard M. Weintraub

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2003 JUN 24 A 10:05
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Docket Operations and Media Management Division
M-30, Room PL-401
400 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Essential Air Service, Tentative Terminations of Subsidy at Rutland
Docket OST-1997-2784 - 21

My name is Richard M. Weintraub and I am a frequent traveler using the Rutland State Airport, Rutland, Vermont. The purpose of this letter is to encourage you to continue the Essential Air Service program at Rutland. As a recent retiree from US Airways (Senior Director of Public and Media Relations), I believe I can bring an informed and somewhat unique perspective to this situation.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that Rutland must make efforts to increase its passenger base and the community now is aware in ways that it has not been previously that it must undertake urgent efforts to market the considerable winter and summer tourism potential of the region. Four major ski areas are within 45 minutes of the Rutland Airport (the two largest within 20 minutes) and each of those areas now has summer programs to complement the winter ski season. Based upon discussions with US Airways executives, there is ample reason to believe that the airline will cooperate with efforts to promote both skiing (winter) and golf (summer) in the Rutland region.

It also must be acknowledged that the Rutland region shares the after-effects of 9/11 along with the entire aviation industry. It simply is premature to remove this overriding factor from the air service equation. Further, as a US Airways Express community, the impact of the parent airline's Chapter 11 filing also must be taken into account.

Finally, the normal impact of mileage calculations simply do not apply to Rutland. The city is served by no Interstate highways and most travel in the region is via two-lane state roads that go through numerous small towns. In winter, road conditions often are difficult due to snow and ice. In short, it is not unusual for a trip to Burlington to take at least an hour and half, a trip to Albany two hours and a trip to Manchester or Hartford, two and a half hours - and that is when the weather is good. Based upon personal and professional experience, this is a considerable impediment to the use of these alternative airports. While there may be some impact from low-cost carriers at these airports, it likely is not anywhere close to the department's assumptions.

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Rutland should be given an opportunity to prove itself absent the restraints of 9/11. It now is aware of the need for a significant marketing program. It should be given the opportunity to implement that program.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Weintraub

cc.:

James H. Douglas, Governor, State of Vermont
Patrick J. Leahy, U.S. Senator
James M. Jeffords, U.S. Senator
Patricia McDonald, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Transportation
David Dill, Director, Operations Division, VAOT
John P. Cassarino, Mayor, Rutland City
Thomas Donahue, Executive Director, RRCC
William McGrath, Executive Director, REDC
Richard Baker, Chair, RRTC
Kevin Mullin, Vermont State Senator
David Allaire, Vermont State Representative
Mike Colgan, Colgan Air Inc.
Dennis DeVany, DOT