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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
03 JUN 24 PM 4:02

Docket Operations and Media Management Division
M-30, Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Essential Air Service Program, Termination of Subsidy at Rutland
Docket OST-1997-2784 -32

The Rutland Economic Development Corporation strongly supports the Rutland Airport and the air service it currently provides to the Region. We know you are aware of the importance of the air service to the Region's economy and based on a recent state study can quantify for you the current impact on the local community at \$7,554,398. While the air service provides the ability to connect with the rest of New England and the world, we also consider this a significant monetary impact on our economy.

Airports and the communities they serve directly affect the economic well being of each other, for good and for bad. Development of a strong tax base, the creation of jobs and increased corporate relocation are all affected by the quality of air service a community receives. In the Rutland Region, even with the September 11th drop in traffic, the airport and air service play a vital role in attracting new business and in providing medium to long-range tourist connections to the existing recreation industry in the region. As a consequence, the threat of losing air service is treated as a very serious problem by the entire community.

We understand that the Essential Air Service Program that subsidizes the current air service will essentially be terminated under the Order to Show Cause issued by the Department of Transportation recently. If the order is finalized, the airline will no doubt be lost to more lucrative communities. Although we would certainly prefer to see the airline operate unsubsidized, the current volatile state of the industry and the post 9/11 plummet in passenger traffic make that impossible at this time.

The gloomy prospect of losing service concerns us and we are asking that you help ensure this community's economic well being by either requesting proposals for new