



**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

OST 2005-20736-35

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUSINESS

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

2005-08-17 1:36

OST-05-20734-30
OST-05-20735-29

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Mollohan:

Thank you for your letter of July 28 regarding the Department of Transportation's carrier selection decision for Parkersburg, Morgantown and Clarksburg/Fairmont, under the Essential Air Service program. As you know, three carriers have submitted proposals for service at one or more of these communities for a two-year rate term--Air Midwest, RegionsAir, and Mesaba Airlines. The staff has requested comments on the proposals from all of the civic parties, and the deadline for submitting comments has now passed.

The staff is currently reviewing the proposals and all of the comments that were timely filed, and a decision should be issued in the next few weeks. However, since the matter is still under review, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of any of the proposals 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 Dockets OST-2005-20734, OST-2005-20735, and OST-2005-20736 as a contact outside the record of the case.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Dennis J. DeVany
Chief, Essential Air Service Division
Office of Aviation Analysis

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ALAN B. MOLLOHAN
1ST DISTRICT, WEST VIRGINIA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

July 28, 2005

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Mr. Dennis J. DeVany
Chief
U.S. Department of Transportation
Essential Air Service Division, X-53
Room 6401, Office of Aviation Analysis
400 7th Street Southwest
Washington, DC 20590-0003

Dear Mr. DeVany:

I am writing in regard to Essential Air Service (EAS) at the Parkersburg, Morgantown, and Clarksburg/Fairmont airports in the First Congressional District of West Virginia.

The Department of Transportation issued an Order Prohibiting Termination of Service and Requesting Proposals in April of this year. Since that time, my office has been in correspondence with the representatives of each of these airports about their air service. The airport managers have expressed their concern to me on many occasions that during the thirteen years that Mesa Air Group has provided US Airways Express service, the level of service has steadily deteriorated. This decline was most recently apparent when Mesa filed 90-day notices to terminate all scheduled air service at these three airports, triggering the EAS subsidy and the Department's order.

Regulatory changes made several years ago that required operators of 19-passenger aircraft to upgrade from Air Taxi to Airline operations have, I believe, seriously affected the costs of operating those aircrafts. The fact that Mesa Air Group continues to use 19-passenger aircraft is one of the reasons that the subsidy is now being requested. The cost of fuel, the low pricing structure adopted by US Airways, and the reduction of service at Pittsburgh have contributed as well. The enplanement levels for the Parkersburg, Morgantown, and Clarksburg/Fairmont markets should certainly support profitable service.

Mr. Dennis J. DeVany

July 28, 2005

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Of the three carriers that responded to the Department of Transportation's Request for Proposal, I would appreciate the Department giving RegionsAir - the carrier preferred by the three airports that would be impacted in the First Congressional District of West Virginia - all possible favorable consideration.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan B. Mollohan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alan B. Mollohan

ABM:jk