



February 19, 2006

The Honorable Mary E. Peters
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket OST-2000-7182 - 1403

Dear Secretary Peters:

I am pleased to support US Airways' request to provide service from the Pensacola Gulf Coast Regional Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport under the Department's slot exemption proceeding, **Docket OST-2000-7182**. The following reasons outline the importance of this air service to the Gulf Coast region:

- Located along the Florida Gulf Coast, Pensacola is the largest population center in a region stretching over 400 miles between New Orleans in the west, and Jacksonville in the east.
- Pensacola's metropolitan area population is approximately 440,000 residents. Another 580,000 residents outside the metro area, live within a one-hour drive of the Pensacola airport, increasing the total population served to over one million residents.
- The Pensacola region's economy consists of industries led by homeland security, tourism, health care and manufacturing. However, what ties Pensacola most strongly to the Washington area is the region's large military and defense presence.
- Military installations in the area include Pensacola Naval Air Station, Whiting Field (the busiest air station in the world), Eglin Air Force Base (one of the largest in the world), Corry Station, Saufley Field, Hulbert Field, U. S. Air Force Materiel Command Center for Air Armament, Naval Education & Training Professional Development and Technology Center, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, Naval Reserve Center, Technology Services Organization – Pensacola, Center for Naval Leadership Detachment, U. S. Force 313th Training Squadron, Delta Company 344th Military Intelligence Battalion and Detachment 1 325th Fighter Wing.
- In addition, numerous defense and aerospace contractors have a significant presence in both the Pensacola and Washington areas such as General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, ARINC, BAE Systems and Raytheon.
- In the last five years, demand for air travel from Pensacola to the Washington area has grown by 51%.
- This service needs to be provided by a financially stable, low cost competitor with a strong network. US Airways meets these requirements as evidenced by our profits in 2006 of over \$500 million (excluding special items). The new US Airways is a vigorous competitor bringing low fares and a customer-friendly attitude to the marketplace

This new service is critical to the future growth of our region. Thank you in advance for your support

Regards,

Mary Jane Steverson
Project Coordinator, Economic Development