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The Honorable Mary Peters
Secretary

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United States Department of Transportation 400 Seventh Street SW Washington, D.C.
20590

Dear Madame Secretary:

I would like to congratulate the Department on a job well done in terms of securing a major expansion of U.S. carrier rights to China. The scarce supply of China flights has imposed significant hardship on the traveling public, on carriers that would like to offer service, and has pitted airports and communities against one another in bitterly contested route case proceedings.

I note that the Department is seeking views on how best to allocate the new rights, and would strongly urge that the Department consider in a single case at least the rights that become available between now and 2009. It is important that the Department put at issue enough opportunities to provide carriers and communities with a reasonable chance of sharing in the good news of the new China agreement. With just a single route available this year and in 2008, a case that fails to include the four flights available in 2009 creates unnecessary scarcity and inevitable disappointment. The Department often conducts multi-year consolidated cases, such as the recent 2005/2006 China case. Deciding the route awards through 2009 provides carriers with beneficial advance notice and avoids the cost and inefficiency of conducting one route case on the heels of another.

I also hope the Department will give serious consideration to streamlining its route case procedures. The Department has used expedited procedures to award routes to countries such as Argentina and Brazil, and should look to do the same for China.

Sincerely,

Jim Oberstar

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