

# Community Comment

Docket OST-2008-012

April 30, 2008

Dennis J. Devany  
 Chief, Essential Air Service Division  
 Office of Aviation Analysis  
 Essential Air Service Division, X-53  
 U.S. Department of Transportation, W86-308  
 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

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DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
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Dear Mr. Devany:

Thank you for forwarding to me the bid proposals solicited by the U.S. Department of Transportation following Atlantic Southeast Airline's filing of a notice to suspend its subsidy-free service to Meridian. As you noted, under the Essential Air Service program, Meridian is guaranteed a minimum of two round trips per day, six days a week to a nearby hub providing convenient access to the national transportation system.

My office has carefully studied the proposals submitted by Mesaba Aviation, Inc., d/b/a Northwest AirlinK, and ASA, d/b/a Delta Connection, and we have concluded that the ASA submission is unequivocally the superior proposal. While we appreciate the interest both airlines have shown in serving the Meridian market, we strongly endorse the ASA bid for the following reasons:

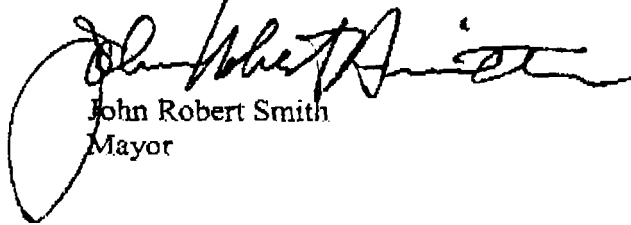
- The ASA proposal includes 13 non stop, round trips per week to Atlanta, where Delta then connects to 129 U.S. destinations and 71 international destinations. The Mesaba proposal calls for service to Memphis, with connections to 88 non-stop destinations. Clearly the ASA proposal gives our local and regional travelers more destination options.
- ASA proposes to utilize the CRJ-200 jet aircraft, while Mesaba would use a Saab 340 propeller aircraft. Our community lobbied strongly for the preferable jet air service several years ago, and we would not want to give up the ease, comfort and reduced flying times of the jet aircraft.
- The ASA aircraft seats 50 passengers, while the Mesaba craft seats 34. Our travelers will have more booking opportunities under the ASA proposal.

Since the two bids were made public, I have heard from a number of local residents, all of whom agree that ASA is, by far, the better option. The City of Meridian strongly urges DOT to award the bid for passenger air service to ASA, d/b/a Delta Connection.

2412 7th Street (Temporary)  
 Post Office Box 1430  
 Meridian, MS 39302-1430  
 www.meridianms.org

Thank you for your assistance in this matter of vital interest to our community's continued growth and economic viability.

Sincerely,



John Robert Smith  
Mayor

- C: Joc Esposito, Delta Air Lines
- D.Scott Yohe, Delta Air Lines
- J. Scott McClain, Delta Air Lines
- Jon Lindlief, Atlantic Southeast Airlines
- John G. Spangers, Mesaba Aviation
- Governor Haley Barbour
- U.S. Senator Thad Cochran
- U.S. Senator Roger Wicker
- U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering
- Gray Swoope, MS Development Authority