Work Force Center
of West Central Texas
"Providing Workforce Solutions for West Central Texas"

**WEST CENTRAL TEXAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
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April 30, 2004

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

Re: City of Abilene's Application to DOT's FY04 Small Community Air Service Development Program

Dear Secretary Mineta:

The West Central Texas Workforce Development Board supports the City of Abilene's request for a Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant to continue improving air service at Abilene Regional Airport for the benefit of west central Texans. As the lead planning agency for workforce issues in the region, we are keenly aware of the vital role that transportation plays in economic and community development.

The City of Abilene received has been exceptionally efficient in using the limited amount of dollars (less than ($90,000 in 2002) to create an innovative Business Development Program that has resulted in increased services and lower fares. Air travel from Abilene has increased and the airport is considered a best practices model for other small domestic airports. Despite the limited resources, Abilene Regional Airport has done a good job of marketing to rural communities, but there is still an untapped market in the surrounding region that could and would use services, if more services existed and there was a greater level of awareness.

It is our understanding that if this grant is funded, the Business Development component will be expanded to include:

- Enhancing outreach to the citizens living in the rural areas of the airport's 32-county service area, including the formation of a Regional Air Service Advisory Council and proposed new regional shuttle service to the airport
- Formalizing a web-based Customer Knowledge Project to fully understand the air service needs and expectations of those citizens and their businesses
- Pursuit of more efficient service to our top western markets to better meet the demands of more than 50% of our passengers
- Expanding its Promotional Fare & Air Service E-mail Notification Program to include paid advertising
- Continuing its efforts to retain American Airlines, Continental Airlines, and SkyWest Airlines, including upgrade of aircraft from turboprops to regional jets

We are very supportive of this application and respectfully request your favorable consideration and action in providing this support for the Abilene Regional Airport.

Sincerely,

Mary Ross

Mary Ross, Executive Director
West Central Texas Workforce Development Board

cc: Mayor Grady Barr, City of Abilene, P.O. Box 60, Abilene, Texas 79604