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STATE OF MONTANA

Governor's Essential Air Service Task Force

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July 28, 2000

U. S. Department of Transportation Dockets
Docket No. FAA-2000-7479 - 50
400 Seventh Street S.W.
Room Plaza 401,
Washington, DC 20590

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To Whom It May Concern:

Montana's Governors Essential Air Service Task Force, which consists of representatives from each of Montana's seven essential air service points submits the following comments relative to the proposed rule to Part 139, Certification of Airports.

On recommendation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to bring all airports to one level of safety this rule is being proposed. It appears this proposal is "reinventing the wheel". In 1987 a similar change to this rule was proposed and the FAA at the time determined that its statutory authority was limited to airports serving passenger operations of air carrier aircraft with more than 30 seats. In 1996 the FAA Reauthorization Act broadened this authority to allow for aircraft with more than 9 passenger seats with the exception of those airports located in Alaska.

The State of Montana has many similar situations and characteristics as Alaska and should also be included in any exemption if this rule is not dismissed.

Since deregulation in 1978 and the beginning of the essential air service program, Montana has never had an aircraft incident/accident by a scheduled commuter aircraft.

The initial plus ongoing costs to comply with this proposed rule to Montana communities is beyond reach and cannot happen as no funds are available to absorb these exorbitant costs. In Montana present law prevents counties from increasing taxes without receiving a majority vote from the people. An increase in taxes for the reasons stated in this proposed rule would be voted down by the people leaving zero money available to meet these safety standards. We understand this initial costs will be eligible for 90% federal participation, but 10% of zero is still zero. We simply do not have any funds available.

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Costs include purchase of crash fire rescue equipment, hiring and training of personnel to operate the equipment, maintenance of equipment, and recurrent training.

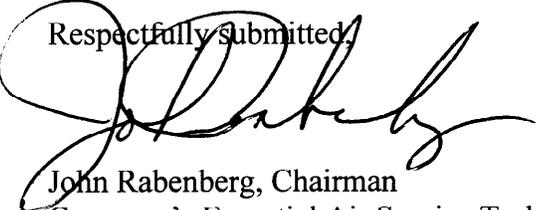
Any cost would be passed on to Big Sky Airlines, Montana's essential air service carrier who it turn would have to increase fares by a minimum of \$100/roundtrip that would put this airline at a competitive disadvantage and out of business.

In conclusion, Montana would have seven airports that meet the proposed safety standards as required by the FAA, but no air carrier to serve these airports.

We are also concerned that the 90-day public-comment period and 120-day Congressional review is not sufficient time for adequate oversight. Congress will be recessed from October until mid-January, leaving very little "legislative" time for review.

Montana requests withdrawal of this proposal by the FAA. If the rule progresses, Montana requests an exemption from these requirements the same as granted to Alaska.

Respectfully Submitted,



John Rabenberg, Chairman
Governor's Essential Air Service Task Force

Cc: Senator Max Baucus
Senator Conrad Burns
Representative Rick Hill