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THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

S10011109-012  
OST-2001-11029  
Correspondence  
Part 300 File

January 22, 2002

The Honorable Tony Knowles  
Governor of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Knowles:

OST-01-11029-129

Thank you for your letter of November 9, 2001, regarding the the importance to Alaska of enhanced access to London's Heathrow Airport and the proposed antitrust immunity for an alliance between American Airlines and British Airways.

We recognize the importance of international air transportation to the economic health of our cities and states throughout the United States. Consequently, we are committed to establishing open skies with the United Kingdom (U.K.) because we believe that an open-skies agreement would provide substantial benefits to U.S. consumers, communities, and airlines in contrast to the current restrictive agreement with the U.K. Securing access for additional airlines and cities to Heathrow Airport is a priority of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and we will continue to work closely with all sectors of the U.S. aviation community.

The Department has consolidated the American/British Airways and the United/British Midland antitrust cases. The requests for immunity will be decided on the record developed in the case, which includes a significant amount of information concerning access to Heathrow Airport. Since the requests are pending before the Department, I ~~am~~ sure that you understand that I cannot comment on the merits of the applications. I assure you, however, that we will consider all relevant factors in making our decision.

As is our normal practice, I am placing a copy of your letter and my response in Docket OST-2001-1 1029 and in the file for contacts outside the record of the case. I appreciate your sharing your views with me. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely yours,

Norman Y. Mineta