



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Issued by the Department of Transportation
on the 13th day of May, 2003

Essential air service at

COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI

under 49 U.S.C. 41731 *et seq.*

Served: May 16, 2003

Docket OST-03-15127

**ORDER ALLOWING SUSPENSION OF SERVICE
AND GRANTING EXEMPTION REQUEST**

Background

On May 6, 2003, Mesaba Aviation, Inc., d/b/a Northwest Airlink, filed a 90-day notice of intent to suspend its scheduled service at Columbus, Mississippi, as of August 4, 2003, and a request for an exemption allowing it to suspend service on shorter notice, as of June 6, 2003. Mesaba operates three daily round trips between Columbus and Memphis, two nonstop and one via Tupelo, Mississippi, with 34-seat Saab SF 340 aircraft.¹ Columbus also receives service from Atlantic Southeast Airlines, Inc., d/b/a Delta Connection, which operates three daily nonstop round trips to Atlanta with Canadair Regional Jets, as well as one daily round trip to Dallas/Ft. Worth, via Alexandria, Louisiana, with 30-seat Embraer EMB-120 Brasilia aircraft.

Essential Air Service Determination

Columbus's essential air service determination, as last established by Order 83-12-27, December 2, 1983, required a minimum of two round trips a day to both Atlanta (no more than one intermediate stop) and Memphis (nonstop), offering a total of at least 67 inbound and outbound seats.²

Community Comments

Mesaba's notice was accompanied by a letter dated March 13, 2003, from the Golden Triangle Regional Airport Authority to Mesaba's code-share partner, Northwest Airlines, Inc., in which the community states that it is amenable to Mesaba's suspension of service on 30 days' notice, beginning on May 6, rather than the full 90 days required by statute.

¹ See the Appendix for a map.

² Order 83-12-27 required capacity sufficient to accommodate 40 inbound and outbound passengers, which continues to represent the maximum guarantee under the essential air service program. Under the 60-percent load-factor standard subsequently established by the Airport and Airway Safety and Capacity Expansion Act of 1987, P.L. 100-223, the number of guaranteed seats is therefore 67: $40/0.60 = 66.7$.

Decision

We will allow Mesaba to suspend service at Columbus as of June 6, since the community is amenable to the carrier's early suspension of service on that date. We would also note that the remaining service operated by ASA greatly exceeds the capacity level that we are able to guarantee under the essential air service program.

Before Mesaba suspends service, however, we expect it to contact all passengers who hold reservations for flights that will be suspended, to inform them of the suspension and the availability of ASA's continuing service, and to assist them in arranging alternate transportation.

This order is issued under authority delegated in 49 CFR 1.56a(f).

ACCORDINGLY,

1. We grant the request of Mesaba Aviation, Inc., d/b/a Northwest Airlink, for an exemption from the 90-day notice period required by 49 U.S.C. 41734(a) to the extent necessary to allow it to suspend service at Columbus, Mississippi, as of June 6, 2003;
2. This docket will remain open until further order of the Department; and
3. We will serve copies of this order on the mayor and airport manager of Columbus, Mississippi; Mesaba Aviation, Inc., d/b/a Northwest Airlink; and Atlantic Southeast Airlines, Inc., d/b/a Delta Connection.

By:

READ C. VAN DE WATER
Assistant Secretary for Aviation
and International Affairs

(SEAL)

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