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April 29, 2004

RECEIVED
APR 30 2004
CITY MGR'S OFFICE

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:

I support 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.

Abilene received $85,010 from the 2002 program, the smallest grant awarded to any community. That $85,010, combined with local funds, enabled the airport to create a formal Business Development Program which:

} Conducted an Air Service Study that defined our air service market and quantified market demand

} Secured a second air carried to a second Texas hub - SkyWest Airlines operating as Continental Connection to Houston Intercontinental Airport

} Encouraged Abilene's two airlines - American and Continental - to provide low promotional fares

The results of these air service improvements were beneficial to Abilene area air travelers, and we indicated our support with a 46% increase in enplanements in the first six months of two-airline service.

Additionally, Abilene Regional Airport has been so successful that the Office of Aviation Analysis in the U.S. Department of Transportation uses us a best practices model for other small U.S. Airports.

To enable this, your approval of Abilene's FY04 grant proposal would fund a business plan that will further address service and fare deficiencies, including:

} Enhanced outreach to the citizens living in the rural areas of the airports 32-county service area, including the formation of a Regional Air Service Advisory Council and proposed new regional shuttle service to the airport

} Pursuit of more efficient service to our top western markets to better meet the demands of more that 50% of our passengers

} Expanding its Promotional Dare & 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

As a result, I respectfully request your favorable action on Abilene Regional Airport's grant application.

Sincerely,

Mike Hatley
Executive Director
Sweetwater Enterprise for Economic Development

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