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CITY MGR'S OFFICE

April 28, 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:

I support the City of Abilene's request for a Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASCP) 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 money combined with local funds, enable the airport to create a formal Business Development Program which:

- I personally attended a Texas Marketing Alliance Meeting at the new remodeled airport and our group was given a tour of the new facilities, we were very impressed.
- We were told the City of Abilene had conducted an Air Service Study that defined our air service market and quantified market demand.
- They secured a second air carrier to a second Texas hub – SkyWest Airlines operating as Continental Connection to Houston Intercontinental Airport – I traveled on that SkyWest and went through Houston Intercontinental to attend the TEDC Winter Conference at South Padre Island last January.
- Encouraged Abilene's two airlines – American and Continental – to provide low promotional fares – just last week I went on American Airlines Website to book a flight to Cedar Rapids, Iowa for the graduation of my grandson. American was offering a low round trip fare for $199.00, by the time that I had arranged for the date that I could leave and return to Abilene, Texas, they had sold out of that fare and it has gone back up to $373.00. We need more low fares for the traveling public.

The results of these air service improvements were beneficial to Abilene area air travelers, and that has been a 46% increase in enplanements in the first six months of the two-airline service. Abilene has been so successful that they are now a 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:

1. Enhanced outreach to the citizens living in the rural areas of the airport's 32-county service area, the Texas Midwest Community Network board members travel extensively to meetings within our state, the airlines are a must for our members.
2. There is a major need for more efficient service to our top western markets to better meets the demands of more than 50% of our passengers. We need a small airline that will take us to Ruidoso, New Mexico during the summer months. We travel regularly to Los Vegas, Nevada, Los Angeles, California and Maui in the Islands.
3. Formalizing a web-based Customer Knowledge Project so that people fully understand the air service needs and have links to area businesses.
4. Expand its Promotional Fare and Air Service E-mail Notification Program to included paid advertising.
5. Continuing its efforts to retain American Airlines, Continental Airlines, and SkyWest Airlines, including upgrades of aircraft to regional jets so that we could take in larger markets.

As a result, I respectfully submit my heartfelt positive feelings for the Abilene Regional Airport's grant application and I ask for your favorable action on the grant.

Sincerely,

Connie R. Selden,
Executive Director
Tye Economic Development Corporation
Tye Industrial Development Corporation
PO Box 125
Tye, Texas 79563
325-695-8253

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