HOWARD PAYNE
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 27, 2004

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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:

On behalf of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, I am proud to express support for 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. Our faculty, staff and student body often travel the 72 miles necessary to Abilene to board commercial aircraft.

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 carrier 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

Our faculty, staff and students and many citizens of Brownwood, Texas have benefited from Abilene's air service improvements. I understand that the airport increased its enplanements by 46% 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 them as a best practices model for other small U.S. airports.

I am impressed with Abilene's FY04 grant proposal that would fund a business plan to further address service and fare deficiencies, including:

- Enhanced outreach to the citizens living in the rural areas of the airport's 32-county service area, including the formation of a Regional Air Service Advisory Council and proposed new regional shuttle service to the airport
- Formalizing a web-based Customer Knowledge Project to fully understand the air service needs and expectations of those citizens and their businesses
- Pursuit of more efficient service to our top western markets to better meet the demands of more than 50% of our passengers
- Expanding its Promotional Fare & 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

I strongly support Abilene's efforts to make air travel more accessible to our region and respectfully request your favorable action on Abilene Regional Airport's grant application

Sincerely,

Lanny Hall

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

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