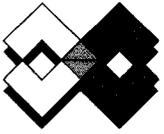


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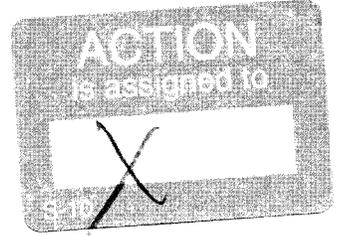


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April 12, 2004

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Room 10200  
Washington, DC 20590



**Re: Application for Small Community Air Service Development Grant –  
Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, Ithaca, New York.**

Dear Secretary Mineta:

I write in support of the grant application from the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. Today, this airport and our community are at a crossroads relative to aviation. As a community we need to move forward and find better solutions to keep all forms of aviation viable at our airport.

Ithaca as a community has a long history of aviation. The predecessor of US Airways got its start in Ithaca as well as a number of other early aviation companies. As you may have read recently in USA Today, Ithaca has been named the “Number 1 Emerging City in the United States.” It is well named. However, without rail transportation, or direct four lane access to the Interstate highway system, effective air service is vital to our community.

The air travel needs of this community are substantial. In addition to being in the heart of the beautiful Fingerlakes area of Central New York, Ithaca is home to the largest employer in Central, New York, Cornell University as well as Ithaca College and numerous high technology companies all relying on both scheduled air service and general aviation. However, the erosion of scheduled air service has produced a lack of airline competition, fewer city pairs, and has forced many people to look elsewhere for their transportation needs. This is particularly acute with relatively short trips (up to 200 miles) where my company is now having our employees drive rather than fly because of the lack of timely affordable flights. Additionally, it is becoming more difficult to get to some destinations which my employees and I to fly to from Ithaca.

A Small Community Air Service Development grant would aid our local Air Services Taskforce working with our Airport administration and our County Legislature in doing the research to determine the best strategic course of action for our airport to take and then executing that strategy which will serve the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport well for many years.

Your consideration of Ithaca’s application would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Larry F. Baum  
Chairman and CEO

APR 12 2004  
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ITHACA, NY 14850