



ALASKA AIR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION

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19 April 2013

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C. Joy Journey
ALASKA AIR
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Congressman Don Young, US House of Representatives, 2111 Rayburn Building, Washington DC 20515-0201
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The Honorable Mark Begich, US Senate, 144 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510
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The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, US Senate, 709 Hart Building, Washington DC 20510-0202
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SUBJECT: ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE IN ALASKA

Dear Congressman Young, Senator Murkowski and Senator Begich:

The Alaska Air Carriers Association (AACAA) is requesting your assistance in preventing potentially harmful cuts as a result of sequestration to Essential Air Service in Alaska.

As you know, the Essential Air Service program allows 45 communities in Alaska to be connected to life-sustaining services. The EAS program underwrites scheduled flight service where it may otherwise prove economically infeasible. EAS provides a vital lifeline for communities off the road system especially, offering regular US mail service, transportation for business and leisure travelers who support these fragile rural economies, and the most fundamental link--connection to a larger city with healthcare and emergency resources.

The role of Essential Air Service in Alaska lies in sharp contrast to its function in the Lower 48. While some Alaska EAS communities may be totally inaccessible otherwise, except by an hours or days-long boat or snow machine ride, several EAS communities in the Lower 48 lay within an hour's drive from an international airport.

This disparity underscores the need for the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) to prioritize Alaska EAS funding when making decisions about where to preserve service, and where to allow market forces to take over routes which have outlived the need to remain federally subsidized.

We appreciate all the time and effort the USDOT Essential Air Service program administrators spend on maintaining these critical air service links in our vast state. We stand ready to work with them, and you, to ensure our rural Alaska communities' lifelines are protected as you work through the sequestration process.

Alaska is approximately 1/3 of the communities served under EAS contracts, however, expenses to serve these 45 communities are less than 10% of the EAS program. Eighty-two percent of our communities are not accessible by road and rely on air transport for all life sustaining goods and services. Alaska's people travel by air eight times more often per capita than those in rural areas of the Lower 48, and ship 39 times more freight per capita—nearly one ton per person per year.

Please help insure that the viability of communities in Alaska and small businesses struggling to survive are not unfairly swept away or categorized alongside communities on road systems in the Lower 48.

Sincerely,

C. Joy Journey, Executive Director for
Mike Stedman, President

Cc: Ray LaHood, US Department of Transportation; Robert Letteney, US Department of Transportation; AACAA Board of Directors

Existing to foster and support a stable commercial aviation industry founded upon the principles of safety, professionalism and longevity

Established in 1966, AACAA is a statewide organization representing over 170 members. Our members meet the needs of rural Alaskans and the traveling public by providing scheduled commuter travel, on-demand air charter, emergency medical evacuation, flight seeing, pilot training, aircraft maintenance, parts sales, fuel sales, storage, rental, and airline servicing.