

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4304

March 26, 2012

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket OST-2012-0029

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On March 12, 2011, the Department of Transportation (DOT) received seven applications from new entrant or limited incumbent air carriers at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DC) for beyond-perimeter service. As a Senator from Texas and a strong advocate for increased competition, I am particularly interested and strongly supportive of the Southwest Airlines' application to initiate the first ever daily, nonstop flight between Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) and DCA.

With a population of near 800,000, Austin now ranks as the 4th largest city in Texas. According to data from the 2010 Census, Austin grew faster than any other major metropolitan area in the State over the ten year period. Austin-Bergstrom also saw record passenger traffic in 2011 with over 9 million travelers, and Southwest Airlines rated as the top carrier choice for over one-third of all passengers.

I strongly urge DOT's favorable consideration of Southwest's proposal. An award of two slot exemptions for AUS-DCA nonstop service by Southwest would expand competition, capacity and service options at DCA, as well as improve access and lower ticket prices for travelers who seek more convenient and affordable travel options to and from Washington, DC. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Kay Bailey Hutchison