



May 16, 2023

Submitted Electronically via email

Mr. Michael Gormas
Essential Air Service Office
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: **OPPOSE**-MOTION OF SOUTHERN AIRWAYS EXPRESS FOR RESOLICITATION OF PROPOSALS
Docket DOT-OST-2001-10682 - Fort Dodge, Iowa

Dear Mr. Gormas,

Fort Dodge has been copied by email on a “Motion of Southern Airways Express for Resolicitation of Proposals” filed on May 9, 2023 containing the following language, “NOTICE: ANY PERSON MAY SUPPORT OR OPPOSE THIS MOTION BY FILING AN ANSWER AND SERVING A COPY ON ABOVE-NAMED COUNSEL AND ALL PERSONS SERVED WITH THIS MOTION, NO LATER THAN MAY 18, 2023.” This letter submitted via email to the USDOT for the docket with an email copy being sent to Garofalo Goerlich Hainback PC agoerlich@ggh-airlaw.com, and others included in their Motion, will serve as our written opposition to Southern Airways’ Motion to resolicit proposals.

In a letter dated June 24, 2022, Fort Dodge submitted our recommendation to the USDOT not supporting either proposal submitted by Boutique Air or Southern Airways and our justification for that recommendation is included in that letter.

It’s very disappointing that Southern Airways felt it was not appropriate to contact the Fort Dodge Regional Airport before they filed this motion. We could have had a conversation regarding our community’s position on the current situation and our continued support for SkyWest’s air service and our support of their application for SkyWest Charter operation. In the Motion of Southern Airways Express for Resolicitation of Proposals, they state, “[...] requiring SkyWest Airlines to continue serving these four points, though not necessarily at frequencies meeting the basic EAS threshold.” Both proposals FOD received in 2022 from Boutique and Southern were with single engine aircraft under 10 seats in their fleet mix which requires a waiver of basic EAS thresholds.

The challenges that regional airlines are experiencing have never been more apparent and while we appreciate Southern’s willingness to submit another proposal, our community’s position is still the same as it was in June 2022. We are supportive of SkyWest’s level, quality, and reliability of service they have provided even with being held in. Which is the reason we are supportive of SkyWest Charters application and are willing to wait for DOT approval before entertaining another round of air service proposals.



Commuter Air Authorization has been granted to dozens of carriers by the FAA, but no applicant has been as highly qualified, or offered safety standards, like SWC. We are therefore concerned that a group of special interest aviation-related labor groups are using their influence to delay the certification process. We feel the obvious logic is to move forward with SkyWest Charters application in a non-emotional, non-biased, bipartisan manner.

I appreciate the patience and communication the USDOT has shown us throughout this unusual process and look forward to working together towards the best solution for our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rhonda M. Chambers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rhonda M. Chambers
Director of Aviation

Cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley-United States Senator The Honorable Matt Bemrich-Mayor, Fort Dodge, IA
The Honorable Joni Ernst-United States Senator Fort Dodge Regional Airport Commission
The Honorable Randy Feenstra-United States Representative Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance