

GRANT COUNTY

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County Manager

June 18, 2020

Mr. Scott Faulk
U.S. Department of Transportation
EAS & Domestic Analysis Division
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Via email: scott.faulk@dot.gov

Re: Support for Advanced Air to provide Essential Air Service to Silver City/Grant County, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Faulk,

Please accept this letter in favor of Advance Air to provide Essential Air Service at the Silver City, Grant County Airport.

Advanced Air has provided Silver City – Grant County (SVC) with Essential Air Service for a year and a half. They have provided on time service and completions with a reliable twin engine plane, provided excellent customer service, and built relationships with the community. Grant County has experience with both Boutique Air and Advanced Air, and there is no comparison. Advanced Air has a plane that is dedicated to serving our community. We do not experience the many service delays we had with Boutique who routed one aircraft to serve two EAS routes. Boutique routed from Dallas to Carlsbad to Albuquerque and then to Grant County. A delay in any of the locations would affect all of the other stops.

The County has multiple concerns with the Denver Air proposal. Denver Air does not currently have operations in Phoenix or Albuquerque. They prefer to operate out of the sterile area in the airport. The Grant County airport does not have TSA so we are considered “non-sterile”. Flights originating from Silver City cannot disembark into another airport’s “sterile” area. Denver Air recently was awarded the EAS contract for Clovis, NM and immediately requested Clovis to request TSA operations. This is a huge undertaking requiring the development of a TSA approved security plan and remodeling our terminal for all of TSA’s required equipment. This is not a good option for Silver City.

Also, from our perspective there are some issues regarding the projected seat sales. Boutique Air projected seat sales of 14,077, which is 7,337 more than the Advanced Air bid of 6,740 seats. Denver Air projects seat sales 13,478 which equates to 6,738 more than the Advanced Air bid of 6,740 seat sales. Given in 2019 Advanced Air did 10,872 seat sales with almost a perfect completion factor we do not think Boutique’s projection of selling 14,077 and Denver’s projection of 13,478 is reasonable, especially considering the dramatic decline in people traveling by air. Advanced Air’s projected seat sale number of just under 7,000 per year is an honest estimate in this new world.

Office Of The Grant County Commissioners

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When Advanced was selected, the community strongly requested transparent pricing with a set seat price, which Advanced has done. The community has wanted a single price per seat, not a range of pricing which Boutique is proposing.

Further concern with the Denver Air proposal is the proposed 18 round trips per week verses our current 24. This would result to 312 less round trip options a year compared to our current number of flights. We do not see the need for larger planes but an increase in flight options, so the 18 flights per week by Denver Air would be a significant reduction in flight options per day.

Advanced Air has put forward the most realistic bid recognizing the seat sales are going to be lower for the foreseeable future. Also they have lowered their seat price to \$65 for ABQ and \$85 PHX and are still offering the discounted ticket books which are transferable; both are important to the community. An airline that puts a real budget in place will be in a position to operate at the levels they have committed to.

The Board of County Commissioners unanimously supports the bid submitted by Advanced Air to provide Essential Air Service to Silver City/Grant County. Advanced Air has proven to be an excellent fit for Grant County and we urge the Department of Transportation to award the bid to Advanced Air.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important service to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Ponce", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Chris Ponce
Commission Chairman