

Letter to the editors.

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Essential Air Service (EAS) for the Tri-State Region

EAS administered by Department of Transportation (DOT) has been in effect from 1978 after airline deregulation. Provided to 100 airports within the continental U.S. based on airports that would have lost air service due to deregulation. Meant to sundown in 10 years but now into 44th year.

Burlington, Quincy, & Kirksville have been served by CapeAir. In May, Burlington and Quincy were given notices of termination of contracts made 2021. Burlington had (24) weekly flights for Chicago & St. Louis while Quincy had (36). Kirksville having (21) weekly flights for St. Louis only remains in effect running to 2024.

Reason given was Cape Air has a shortage of pilots. I approached CapeAir VP of planning, Andrew Bonney asking why they were given approval by DOT to increase service to Manistee Michigan in April going to 29 round trips per week to O'Hare from 14 on a seasonal basis. The takeoffs/arrivals added for Manistee about equals curtailed flights for Quincy-Burlington. A phone conversation we had indicated they could not get enough pilots to agree to be based in Quincy-Burlington to sustain flight requirements.

It is noted now Southern Airways Express has been awarded service to Quincy starting December 1st with single engine aircraft. Their subsidy for the 1st of 4 years will be \$4,085,604 increasing 2.5% for each subsequent year for a total of \$16,965,535. If Cape Air contract for its 2nd year had remained in effect their subsidy would have been only \$3,418,994 and \$13,887,181 total. This comes to about 20% increase and an increase of \$3 million over 4 years.

Burlington having rejected one proposal some weeks back has now been given new proposals by both Southern Airways Express and CapeAir for new 4-year contracts. CapeAir Nov 2021 proposal for contract now being cancelled was granted for 4 years subsidy of \$10,802,534. Southern's new proposal is \$14,886,822 while Cape Air's is \$19,811,164. I trust the DOT will go back and ask both Southern and Cape Air why they are so high as subsidy compensation is capped at \$200 per one way flight.

I have tried to propose a new plan for the three communities that have their airports within 90 miles of one another. I have posted details on the Regulations.gov web site. View them by sorting (newer-older) with DOT-OST-2003-14492 Quincy and DOT-OST-2001-8731 Burlington.

The reading of the DOT document Issued Oct 25th granting selection of air carrier for Quincy concerns me as it contains language that says not only has the city waved twin engine aircraft with new contract but also two pilots and there is no guarantee in the future that the city can reject these conditions.

As a taxpayer I want to see EAS continue but I don't want to see it further fuel inflation.

Let's be practical here and at least start thinking about a better direction for the future.

Don Carpenter