



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor



Mario C. Diaz
Director of Aviation

Houston Airports
16930 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77032
fly2houston.com

May 26, 2022

Mr. Michael Martin
EAS and Domestic Analysis Division
Office of Aviation Analysis
Office of Aviation and International Affairs
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Essential Air Services at Victoria, Texas, Docket DOT-OST-2005-20454

Dear Mr. Martin,

On behalf of the Houston Airport System ("HAS"), a Department of the City of Houston, Texas ("Houston"), I want to express our strong support for the Victoria County Community Comments filed on May 20, 2022 by the Victoria Regional Airport, Texas ("Victoria") in the above docket in its effort to ensure the continuation of satisfactory nonstop Essential Air Service ("EAS") between Victoria and Houston, flights that serve Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport ("IAH") and provide greatly needed service between our communities.

Current EAS is being provided by SkyWest pursuant to the Department's hold-in Order of March 11, 2022 (Order 2022-3-8), following SkyWest's March 10, 2022 notice of its proposed termination of EAS to multiple communities throughout the nation. Houston is sympathetic to SkyWest's concerns expressed in that notice regarding the pilot shortages that it faces. However, as DOT attempts to find solutions to the proposed service termination, we believe it vital to advise the Department of the importance of the existing EAS service between Victoria and Houston, and ask that the concerns expressed by Victoria be given due consideration, especially given the statutory mandate (49 U.S.C. § 41733(c)(1)) that special weight be given to considerations of community support as a decisional factor.

As Victoria has emphasized, the existing service is provided using 50-seat, twinjet CRJ-200 aircraft, which are well suited to the demands of the market, with two roundtrips five times weekly, and one roundtrip on the remaining two days of the week. This also satisfies the statutory preference, expressed in 49 U.S.C. § 41732(b), for twin-engine, pressurized aircraft. This type and quality of service also ensures that passengers have convenient access to a major hub – IAH – enabling

Council Members: Amy Peck Tarsha Jackson Abbie Kamin Carolyn Evans-Shabazz Dave Martin Tiffany D. Thomas Mary Nan Huffman Karla Cisneros
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Sallie Alcorn

Controller: Chris Brown



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seamless access nationwide and globally. IAH is one of the nation's premier gateways for both domestic and international services, offering passengers a first-class customer service experience – 4-star rated by Skytrax – and with the benefits of extensive connections as well as carrier interline and baggage agreements, as noted by Victoria. Houston and Victoria share many common business interests, including in the energy, manufacturing, medical, and petrochemical fields, and the existing service provides vital connections between our communities for passengers in these industries, as well as to other business and leisure passengers. Based on the data provided by Victoria in its May 20, 2022 letter to DOT, traffic in the VCT-IAH market has been growing steadily notwithstanding the impact of COVID, reflecting the needs of the market. It would be a significant loss should the current level of service be lost.

In conclusion, Houston strongly supports the position of Victoria concerning the continuation of the type and quality of service currently provided, and hopes that the Department will give significant weight to the views expressed by Victoria regarding its preferred choice, and to Houston's support of the community's preference.

With our thanks for your consideration of Houston's views,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Szczesniak".

Jim Szczesniak
Chief Operating Officer
City of Houston Department of Aviation

cc: Mayor Sylvester Turner, City of Houston
Mr. Kevin Schlemmer, DOT
Mr. Vinicio L. Llerena, Victoria Regional Airport Executive Director
DOT Dockets