

Community Response: Docket OST-7068-7

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

89887

STATEWIDE AVIATION

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July 19, 2000

Re: Akutan, Alaska
EAS Proposal

Mr. Dennis DeVany
Chief, Essential Air Service Division
Office of Aviation Analysis
US Department of Transportation
400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
PERMITS
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Dear Mr. DeVany:

Please accept these comments in response to your June 29, 2000 opportunity to comment on Essential Air Service for Akutan, Alaska. As you know, service to Akutan has been problematic for some time, considering there is neither a land-based airport nor breakwater protected harbor and air service is via float capable aircraft into a relatively unprotected open harbor. Nonetheless, continuing to connect Akutan to our national air service network is critical for life safety and enhancement of commerce in that area. In written correspondence, both the City of Akutan and the Aleutians East Borough lamented high airfares in the Akutan market and expressed support for EAS and runway construction. Toward these ends, the State of Alaska would encourage an Essential Air Service provision that best mirrors the historic need for airlift be provided to this community. It appears PenAir proposal Option A-1 best suits that level, however we do not have those records here in this office, as your office should, to determine a specific service level decision.

As part of the specific subsidy level, we think it is also important to recognize the type of aircraft that is best suited to this market. Your office should have data on the types of aircraft that have been used for service to Akutan in the past (we know both the G21 Grumman Goose and the Cessna 208 Caravan have been used). We understand PenAir is proposing to provide this service with a piston engined G21 and, in the unprotected waters of the Akutan Harbor, we suspect this displacement hull aircraft has advantages for service over float-equipped aircraft, such as the C208, where operating efficiency may be higher, but mission completion would suffer. Operating a 50-year-old aircraft in a salt-water environment in commercial revenue service is very likely more expensive than some other aircraft, but considering the unique service requirements for

Akutan, consideration of a higher subsidy rate to accommodate the higher operating costs of this aircraft appears warranted.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to your consideration in continuing to meet the Essential Air Service subsidy needs of the residents of Akutan.

Sincerely,



Paul Bowers, A. A. E.
Director
Statewide Aviation

Cc: Robert S. Juettner, Administrator, Aleutians East Borough
Erika Tritremmel, City Administrator, City of Akutan
Dave Eberle, Central Region Director, DOT&PF