



May 6, 2015

The Honorable Anthony R. Foxx  
Secretary of Transportation  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
US Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretaries Kerry and Foxx:

As you know, Traverse City is one of the most beautiful and widely visited parts of Michigan. According to a 2013 study by the Anderson Economic Group,

- “Over 3.3 million visitor trips were made to the area;
- These trips resulted in \$1.18 billion in direct spending to area businesses,
- Tourism is responsible for creating and maintaining nearly 12,000 jobs;
- Tourism generated more than \$1.23 billion in economic activity for the Traverse City area.”

Further, the study cites, almost \$67 million in sales tax revenue has been generated from tourism throughout the State of Michigan.

That is why I am extremely concerned to hear that Open Skies Agreements, which set a level playing field for airline carriers around the world, are being undercut by Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Emirates Airline. This is due to the fact they are receiving billions of

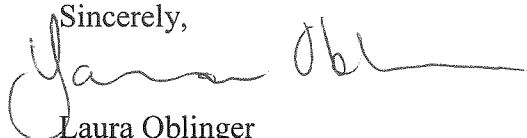
dollars in government subsidies and benefits from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This harms U.S. carriers and their ability to maintain and create good paying jobs here at home.

For a place like Traverse City, with tourism as one of our primary economic engines, the impact will be multi-fold. There will be a loss of jobs directly associated with the airline industry as well as the robust ecosystem that serves the industry. Eventually air fares could increase, resulting in a reduction in travel for businesses and families. In addition, regional routes that bring travelers into Traverse City will become scarce as US carriers are forced to cut routes and these Gulf carriers have no interest in flying to Traverse City. There is no doubt that we will feel the economic impact of those decisions.

Open Skies policies have been good for growth and economic stability here in the U.S. and for Northern Michigan. I strongly urge you to open consultations with the countries of Qatar and the UAE to bring the Gulf carriers into compliance with the Open Skies policy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Oblinger", written over a horizontal line.

Laura Oblinger  
Executive Director

cc: Senator Gary Peters  
Senator Debbie Stabenow  
Representative Dan Benishek