



February 10, 2016

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2051

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Aviation
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, Chairman LoBiondo, and Ranking Member Larsen:

On behalf of the leadership of the Loudoun County, Greater Reston and Dulles Regional chambers of commerce, we write to strongly urge the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to oppose any and all amendments to the "Aviation Innovation, Reform and Reauthorization Act," (H.R. 4441) that would change the current flight limitations at Ronald Reagan National Airport. Specifically, we urge you to strongly oppose any efforts to add additional takeoff and landing slots at, and more beyond perimeter flights from, Reagan National.

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), which manages both federally owned Ronald Reagan National Airport (Reagan National) and Washington Dulles International Airport (Dulles International), was chartered by Congress to "operate, maintain, protect, promote and develop" these two airports as a balanced system. Congress intended that Reagan National function as a short-haul origins and destinations airport with a limit on the number of takeoffs and landings per hour, the so-called "slot rule," and a restriction on the distance of non-stop flights, the so-called, "perimeter rule." Washington-Dulles International Airport's function, on the other hand, was to serve long-haul and international flights. For more than two decades, this arrangement, dictated by Congress, allowed passenger activity at Dulles International to grow steadily and activity at Reagan National to remain relatively stable at just over 15 million passengers.

However, in the last three Federal Aviation Administration reauthorizations, Congress has added 52 slots and allowed 20 extra roundtrip flights beyond the 1,250 mile perimeter. As a consequence of these changes, Reagan National, which was designed to accommodate 15 million passengers annually, now handles 23 million passengers a year. As a result, passengers at Reagan National are now regularly confronted with gridlock on airport roadways, parking lots filled to capacity, overcrowded hold-rooms and gate areas, security-lines backups and delays at over-stressed baggage claim areas. Furthermore, the Airports Authority is experiencing a tripling of aircraft noise complaints as carriers have

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www.RestonChamber.org
www.LoudounChamber.org
www.DullesRegionalChamber.org



squeezed more and more flights into Reagan National. It is important to note that every major airport in the world confronted with similar noise complaints from residents has been forced to restrict flight operations.

At the same time that operations at Reagan National have exploded, Dulles International has lost nearly 16 percent of domestic air service since 2010, largely because of airlines taking advantage of rule changes to shift flights to Reagan National from Dulles International. This migration of passengers has driven up costs at Dulles International, eroding its competitive position. Airlines use a per-passenger cost as a factor in choosing airports, and that cost at Dulles International - driven largely by debt service for capital improvements made to accommodate more passengers, many of which have now moved to Reagan National - has made Dulles International one of the most expensive airports in the nations for airlines to serve.

While international service has remained relatively stable at Dulles International, international carriers rely on a robust domestic air network to transport their passengers to destinations across the United States. Therefore, there is a real danger of losing both international and domestic air service at Dulles International if the Perimeter Rule at Reagan National is further expanded or eliminated entirely.

Finally, Washington-Dulles International Airport is a critical economic engine for Northern Virginia, supporting over 18,000 direct and indirect jobs and providing more than \$78 million in state and local taxes annual. Therefore, maintaining a healthy balance within this two airport system is imperative for the Metropolitan Washington Region, and Virginia's continued economic success.

We appreciate the pressure on members of the Committee from colleagues seeking more direct flights to their districts from Reagan National. But the simple fact is that Reagan National's infrastructure simply cannot handle more demand. Once again, we strongly urge the Committee to oppose any efforts to add additional takeoff and landing slots at, and more beyond perimeter flights from, Reagan National, which would make the current problem of an out-of-balance airport system even worse.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Howard, President and CEO
Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce

Eileen D. Curtis, President and CEO
Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce

Mark S. Ingraio, President and CEO
Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce

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