

April 8, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I write to request that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) expedite the contract review of air service carriers that have applied or may apply to replace SkyWest Airlines following their announcement to discontinue Essential Air Service (EAS) to the San Luis Valley Regional Airport and Pueblo Memorial Airport. As EAS airports, these facilities rely on DOT to ensure that service to this region of Colorado continues uninterrupted.

The San Luis Valley Regional Airport in Alamosa, Colorado serves a region in South-Central Colorado larger than the state of Rhode Island. Surrounded by three mountain passes, the closest major airport is at least two hours away in Colorado Springs. SkyWest Airlines' cancellation of these contracts surprised the airport and the broader community as enplanement numbers are increasing and service negotiations were recently finalized in October of 2020.

The Pueblo Memorial Airport serves the South and Southeastern regions of Colorado and benefits greatly from EAS. Reliable and accessible air service, to and from Pueblo Memorial Airport, is necessary for Pueblo and the surrounding communities.

As you know, DOT's EAS program subsidizes airline service for small, rural airports to ensure the surrounding communities have access to commercial flights. The EAS program also reimburses airlines for empty seats on flights to major hub airports.

I understand an applicant submitted a bid for service to the San Luis Valley Regional Airport prior to SkyWest Airlines' announcement in March. Furthermore, the Alamosa Board of County Commissioners had vetted the carrier and recommended them (see letter attached). I respectfully request that you give this applicant expedited review subject to applicable laws and regulations, to ensure service continues uninterrupted in this region of Colorado. I also encourage DOT to consider the recommendations from Pueblo's airport community in the EAS selection process to determine best fit for this region.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Bennet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "B".

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator