

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

June 8, 2012

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Walla Walla Regional Airport; FY 12 Small Community Air Service Development Program

Dear Secretary LaHood,

I am writing to express my support for the Small Community Air Service Development Program grant application submitted by the Port of Walla Walla, the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance, Tourism Walla Walla, and the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce. The application will help implement a new Walla Walla Airport Coalition Marketing Plan designed to ensure continued passenger growth on inbound and outbound Alaska Airlines (Horizon Air) flights to Walla Walla Regional Airport (ALW). A federal commitment will be matched with \$50,000 in local funds.

Typically, Walla Walla Regional Airport is served by two inbound and two outbound Alaska Airlines flights per day, with more than 32,000 total boardings in 2011. Passenger numbers and load factors in the first quarter of 2012 indicate that total boardings for 2012 may surpass 2011 levels. That said, load factors are not yet sufficiently high to ensure long-term continued service from Alaska Airlines – the only scheduled carrier currently flying into and out of ALW. Alaska Airlines has indicated that unless load factors are raised, it will be forced to seriously consider discontinuing scheduled service to ALW.

Walla Walla, Washington is geographically located near the cities of Milton-Freewater and Pendleton, Oregon, two additional population centers that are currently underserved by scheduled aviation service. ALW is the closest airport to both of these cities and a federal investment designed to enhance air service at ALW, such as that which would be provided by a successful award from the Small Community Air Service Development Program, will benefit residents of both northeast Oregon and southeast Washington.

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This project proposal is an excellent example of public private partnership and will help ensure the maintenance of existing jobs and the possibility of further job growth as scheduled aviation service is maintained and, over time, hopefully expanded further at Walla Walla Regional Airport.

I ask you give this application your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maria Cantwell", written in a cursive style.

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator