

United States Senate

June 9, 2023

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

The Honorable Carol A. (Annie) Petsonk
Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Assistant Secretary Petsonk:

I write today to express my concern with the pressing situation facing small community air service in Montana. Rural communities, who would otherwise not have expedient access to the national transportation network, rely on this service to connect them with the rest of the nation.

As you know, the ongoing national pilot shortage has exacerbated the already limited access to air service across rural America. In Montana, reduced flights means reduced access to vital services that can only be found in larger cities and a significant hit to a major economic lifeline for these communities. Fortunately, certain regional airlines have offered innovative proposals to fill this critical gap. More than a year ago, SkyWest Airlines submitted an application seeking commuter air carrier authorization to your agency. Disappointingly, no action has been taken on your part since, even though the need and demand for service has only increased.

I share your priority for maintaining the highest levels of safety, security, and service for any airline that seeks to operate in Montana. Fortunately, SkyWest has set conditions for its pilots that exceed the 1,500-hour requirement for an ATP license and committed to utilizing standard, traditional TSA security checkpoints for passengers boarding all SkyWest Charter Part 380 flights. With these and other industry-leading standards in mind, I urge the expeditious review and full consideration of SkyWest's application for commuter authority to ensure safe, reliable, and quality air service can continue to be maintained in Montana's rural communities.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator