

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Graves:

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Order 2020-4-2 was finalized last month and establishes the parameters for implementation of authorities granted to DOT by Sections 4005 and 4114(b) of the CARES Act. We believe that the intent of Congress, when providing federal financial assistance to airlines managing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, was not to eliminate their responsibility for servicing all airports that they were servicing prior to March 2020. We are concerned that the DOT's method to identify covered points has left certain airports that provide critical services without air carrier service and ask that this to be addressed in any legislation addressing the effects of this pandemic.

Under Order 2020-4-2, the Department identifies several cities as an encompassing point of service for a broader metropolitan region. While this may appear appropriate based on the broad city market identification data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and given the relative geographic proximity of these cities, these airports serve distinct populations and provide unique and different services.

For example, Newport News and Norfolk have been designated as a single covered ‘point of service’ but both cities are surrounded and separated by water. The only physical connection is through two tunnels and a single bridge that span Norfolk Harbor at the southern end of the

Chesapeake Bay. Residents of the area are confronted with traffic congestion at all hours of the day when trying to cross these bridges and tunnels. Recognizing this, the region has committed to spend billions of dollars in the coming years to expand their traffic capacity. However, in the meantime, passage from Newport News to Norfolk is neither quick nor easy.

The Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport (PHF) serves more than half a million residents on the Virginia Peninsula. Additionally, Newport News is home to Huntington Ingalls Industries, the only builder of Navy aircraft carriers in the country, and one of only two nuclear submarine builders in the United States. Newport News is also the home of the U.S. Department of Energy's Jefferson National Laboratory, which conducts important nuclear physics research. Further, the Virginia Peninsula is the site of several high-profile military facilities and commands located at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, in addition to NASA's Langley Research Center. PHF is the quickest and best option for service to all these facilities. The hiatus in air carrier operations as a result of DOT's parameters for the implementation of the CARES Act will negatively affect these critical national security operations.

This week, PHF was informed that Delta, one of two airlines that services PHF will end all flights to and from the airport – potentially through September 30, 2020. It appears that because of the DOT's rule, the airline has accepted a bailout while airports and customers suffer which was not the intent of this legislation.

We understand the impact of this pandemic has been widespread and we urge you to address this issue in the upcoming legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress



ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress



ELAINE G. LURIA
Member of Congress