NEGATIVE: Essential Air Service - good

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen and Katherine Baker

Affirmative plan cancels the federal Essential Air Service. EAS is a federal subsidy to pay some of the cost for small towns to have air service connections that might not exist otherwise, since they would not be profitable for the airlines. This Negative brief argues that the cost is minimal and the benefits well justify it.

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OPENERS AND NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Called ESSENTIAL Air Service for a reason

Pat Bradley, 2017. (North Country Bureau Chief for WAMC, a public radio network headquartered in New York.) “Proposed Cuts To Essential Air Service Concern North Country Airports” MAR 30, 2017. <http://wamc.org/post/proposed-cuts-essential-air-service-concern-north-country-airports>

If the program ends, Massena Town Supervisor Joseph D. Gray says there will be no passenger air service from the Massena International Airport. “There are not a lot of regional carriers, people that are willing to fly from more rural areas. So you have to first of all find an airline that’s willing to fly that market. But then number two that airline has to be able to provide an affordable ticket. That is the reason that it is necessary. But this isn’t the first time someone’s come after the EAS subsidy. It’s called Essential Air Service for a reason. It is indeed essential. This subsidy isn’t a waste of money. It’s essential to allow residents of rural areas access to the greater air travel market.”

TOPICALITY

1. Insignificant reform

Link: EAS budget is $288 million/year

DENVER POST 2017 (journalist Jesse Paul) "Trump budget targets flight program that links small towns to “the outside world” " 7 June 2017 <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/07/essential-air-service-budget-target-trump-administration/>

The White House also says EAS-eligible communities are relatively close to major airports and that they could be served by other modes of transportation. The budget calls for at least $175 million in cuts to the program for 2018. The EAS budget in fiscal year 2016 was about $288 million, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, which oversees EAS.

Link: US Dept of Transportation budget is $94.7 billion

US Dept of Transportation 2015. "Fiscal Year 2016 Budget" <https://www.transportation.gov/budget/fy2016>

The President’s Budget provides a total of $94.7 billion in discretionary and mandatory funding in 2016 for the Department of Transportation to support infrastructure projects critical for long-term growth; improve America's roads, bridges, transit systems, railways, and aviation systems; enhance safety; spur job creation; and improve the way federal dollars are spent.

"Very small number of passengers" involved in EAS

DENVER POST 2017 (journalist Jesse Paul) "Trump budget targets flight program that links small towns to “the outside world” " 7 June 2017 <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/07/essential-air-service-budget-target-trump-administration/>

“This is not a new thing,” James Simmons, who teaches aviation and aerospace science at Metropolitan State University of Denver, said of efforts to cut EAS funding. “There’s more of an emphasis on federal budget reduction under the current administration than there has been under other administrations. I think the political winds, if you want to put it that way, are blowing more strongly.” Simmons says that, overall, the program impacts a very small number of passengers when considering, say, the more than 50 million people who pass through DIA each year.

Violation: This is a microscopic reform. 0.30% change

288 million divided by 94.7 billion equals 0.30% change in the Dept of Transportation

Impact 1: Harms debate

Allowing debates about insignificant reform opens up debate competition to an infinite number of cases, making effective preparation and debate impossible. Negatives cannot prepare for every possible zero point 3 percent change in public policy that everyone could imagine, and we shouldn't be expected to. The best way to teach Affirmatives not to do this is to award a Negative ballot.

Impact 2: No Affirmative team.

No one showed up to affirm a significant reform to transportation policy in this debate. No matter who wins, you should vote Negative.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. Little taxpayer impact

Foreign aircraft fees fund EAS. In 2015, $108 million out of $263 million (41%) came from foreign aircraft, not US taxpayers

Rachel Yang 2017 (analyst in Transportation and Industry, Congressional Research Service) 30 March 2017 Essential Air Service (EAS) <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44176.pdf>

The EAS program is funded from overflight fees paid to the Federal Aviation Administration by foreign aircraft that transit U.S. airspace without landing in or taking off from the United States. Since FY2002, Congress has supplemented the overflight fees with discretionary annual appropriations of varying size.

**END QUOTE. Yang goes on to say later in the same context QUOTE:**

The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 (P.L. 113-235) provided $263 million in total EAS funding for FY2015, including $108 million in funding from overflight fees and $155 million in discretionary appropriation.

2. Responses to “high costs”

Growing number of communities served

Rachel Y. Tang, 2015. (Analyst in Transportation and Industry for the Congressional Research Service.) “Essential Air Service (EAS)” September 3, 2015. <http://www.prescottads.com/Courier-pdf-doc/EssentialAirServiceReport.pdf>

The rate of increase in EAS spending remains a central issue of concern to Congress. However, program spending should be examined in conjunction with the number of communities served. According to a GAO report, 95 communities received subsidized EAS service in 1995 and 150 in 2008. In 2014, this number was 159.

Pays for itself

CBS News, 2015. (News broadcasting service.) “Is Essential Air Service wasting taxpayer money?” February 24, 2015. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/government-subsidized-essential-air-service-waste-of-taxpayer-money-some-say/>

The Department of Transportation shells out over $6 million a year to fund that route, one of 113 in the lower 48 states servicing rural communities like Devils Lake. Passenger Mark Zimmer said it saves him about two hours of travel time each way. "Parking is a lot easier here and lot closer for me to come here than go to Grand Forks," Zimmer said. Devils Lake mayor Dick Johnson said the flights attract business and he estimates they help inject $10 million a year into the local economy.

3. Response to empty planes

“Not many people on the flights” RESPONSE: lacks context

Tony Grubesic, Ran Wei, Alan Murray, and Fangwu Wei, 2016. (International Regional Science Review. Tony: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA. Ran: University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. Alan: Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Fangwu: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA.) “Essential Air Service in the United States: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Spatial and Operational Efficiencies” 2016. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0160017614532653>

One important way to measure the efficiency of EAS operations is tracking PLFs on served routes (Schefczyk 1993). A PLF is a measure of how much carrying capacity is used. Basically, the PLF reflects the number of passenger miles flown as a percentage of seat miles available. If the flight distance between two cities is 700 miles and the aircraft has fifty total seats with only twenty occupied by paying passengers, the load factor is 40 percent. Generally speaking, as PLF values approach 100 percent, commercial operators are content because there is little excess capacity in the system. As PLF values approach 0 percent, excess capacity exists. In 2011, there were 116 EAS-subsidized airports in the United States. The average load factor for all carriers across this system was 41.45 percent. This suggests that significant level of excess capacity exists in the EAS system. An issue with the PLF measure, however, is that it lacks context. This is particularly true when considering the EAS program because each carrier (and community) receives a different subsidy. That is, all EAS airports are not treated uniformly. In addition, each community has a different competitive backdrop—some are relatively close to medium or large hubs, while others are farther away. As a result, the fundamental question regarding operational efficiency still pertains to PLF performance, but is shaped by subsidy levels and the local competitive landscape.

MINOR REPAIRS

1. Reduce the number of waivers

Current law has waivers allowing extra subsidies – We could stop granting those and save money without eliminating EAS

Rachel Yang 2017 (analyst in Transportation and Industry, Congressional Research Service) 30 March 2017 Essential Air Service (EAS) <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44176.pdf>

Some provisions in effect since the passage of the 2012 FAA reauthorization (P.L. 112-95) could delay, if not negate, the law’s attempt to shrink the program. For example, Section 426(c) authorizes the Secretary of DOT, subject to the availability of funds, to grant waivers to communities exceeding the $200 subsidy-per-passenger cap on a case-by-case basis; Section 421(e) authorizes an unlimited number of waivers that may be granted, on an annual basis, to communities not meeting the minimum daily enplanement requirement; and Section 425 permits restoration of EAS eligibility to a community determined ineligible for subsidized EAS once these conditions are met.

2. Minor budget cuts, not elimination

a. Analyze airports to find which communities can be eliminated from subsidy

Felipe A. Rodriguez, 2017. (Writes for AIRWAYS, A Global Review of Commercial Flight since 1994: the leading Commercial Aviation publication in North America and 35 nations worldwide. Based in Miami, Florida.) “Op-Ed: How Essential is the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program?” November 1, 2017. <https://airwaysmag.com/industry/op-ed-how-essential-is-the-essential-air-service-eas-program/>

This program needs to be put under a microscope and be very carefully analyzed, from its criteria to who’s being funded and for how long. Each community that receives EAS funding needs to be evaluated, and then the DOT can determine elimination from the program, as opposed to scrapping it altogether. There is a lot at risk here.

b. Cutting funding would force airports to be more proactive

Felipe A. Rodriguez, 2017. (Writes for AIRWAYS, A Global Review of Commercial Flight since 1994: the leading Commercial Aviation publication in North America and 35 nations worldwide. Based in Miami, Florida.) “Op-Ed: How Essential is the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program?” November 1, 2017. <https://airwaysmag.com/industry/op-ed-how-essential-is-the-essential-air-service-eas-program/>

By cutting down the funding, it would make air carriers and small airports more proactive—not to say they aren’t now. But they would be forced to work on their marketing and public relations to attract and retain high passenger volume. This would force air carriers to be more self-sufficient, along with the assistance of the airports, as well as the community they serve.

3. Reverse the 2013 pilot rule

2013 FAA rule raised EAS costs by setting higher standards for pilots

Rachel Y. Tang, 2015. (Analyst in Transportation and Industry for the Congressional Research Service.) “Essential Air Service (EAS)” September 3, 2015. <http://www.prescottads.com/Courier-pdf-doc/EssentialAirServiceReport.pdf>

In addition to the multiple contributing factors previously discussed, government regulations could also affect the provision of air service to small communities. For example, a 2013 FAA pilot qualification rule increased the qualification requirements for airline pilots. Many pilots working for regional airlines did not meet the new minimum qualifications. According to GAO, 11 of the 12 regional airlines it interviewed reported difficulties finding sufficient numbers of qualified pilots over the previous year, and some limited or canceled service to some smaller communities because of pilot shortages. The rules seem likely to force small carriers to raise salaries in order to attract qualified pilots, potentially raising EAS subsidy costs as well.

INHERENCY

1. EAS has already been reduced & reformed

Congress cut EAS subsidies and added new minimum passenger requirements

Rachel Yang 2017 (analyst in Transportation and Industry, Congressional Research Service) 30 March 2017 Essential Air Service (EAS) <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44176.pdf>

Over the years, Congress has limited the scope of the program, mostly by eliminating subsidy support for communities within a specified driving distance of a major hub airport and capping subsidies under certain criteria. The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 included additional EAS reform measures, including the requirement that a community have a minimum number of daily enplanements to remain eligible for subsidy. Further, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-76) and the Continuing Appropriations Resolution of 2015 (P.L. 113-164) introduced additional measures to shrink the program.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Lost jobs

Link: Small airlines will disappear without EAS

DENVER POST 2017 (journalist Jesse Paul) "Trump budget targets flight program that links small towns to “the outside world” " 7 June 2017 <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/07/essential-air-service-budget-target-trump-administration/>

While EAS was created as a response to airline deregulation, the program has also led to the creation and financial base of small airlines — such as Great Lakes, Boutique Air and PenAir — while creating a path for young pilots get the hours they need to move up to the big carriers. “If there was no EAS, I would pull out of Denver,” said PenAir CEO Danny Seybert.. The airline, based in Anchorage, Alaska, recently began flying five routes out of DIA to small airfields in Liberal, Kan., and Kearney and North Platte, Neb.

Link: No commercial air service for small communities.

Some communities would have no commercial air service without the EAS

Billy Long, 2017. (The congressional representative from Missouri's 7th District.) “The value of the Essential Air Service program” April 4, 2017. <http://www.news-leader.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/04/04/value-essential-air-service-program/100053032/>

Essential Air Service (EAS), administered by the Department of Transportation (DOT), is an important part of southwest Missouri. This program allows for smaller communities, like Joplin, to have a certain number of round-trip flights each week at a lower rate. The DOT recently reselected American Airlines to continue to provide EAS at the Joplin Regional Airport through Feb. 28, 2019. Over the years, this program has attracted many individuals and businesses to southwest Missouri. Without this program, the Joplin airport would likely have no commercial air service.

Brink: Subsidy keeps air service in small communities

GAO, 2006. (GAO provides fact-based, nonpartisan information to Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates federal spending and performance.) “Commercial Aviation: Programs and Options for the Federal Approach to Providing and Improving Air Service to Small” September 14, 2006 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-06-398T/html/GAOREPORTS-GAO-06-398T.htm>

If EAS subsidies were removed, air service may end at many small communities. EAS subsidies have helped communities that were served by air carriers before deregulation continue to receive scheduled air service. Since air carriers have to show financial data to support a subsidy calculation, it is likely that if the subsidy is no longer available commercial air service would also end. Furthermore, according to a DOT official, once a community receives subsidized air service it is rare for an air carrier to offer to provide unsubsidized air service. Finally, in previous work, we reported that subsidies paid directly to air carriers have not provided an effective transportation solution for passengers in many small communities.

Impact: Small airlines provide hundreds of jobs

DENVER POST 2017 (journalist Jesse Paul) "Trump budget targets flight program that links small towns to “the outside world” " 7 June 2017 <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/07/essential-air-service-budget-target-trump-administration/>

San Francisco-based Boutique Air, which also operates out of DIA  has quickly grown to serve 30 airports, including Cortez, Alamosa and Albuquerque. “We offer 111 flights per day, which average 68 percent full. We fly three to four round trips daily offering the residents an easy commute,” said Boutique Air CEO Shawn Simpson. The airline also provides hundreds of jobs throughout the U.S., Simpson said. Boutique Air flew about 115,000 passengers in 2016 and expects to double that number this year.

2. Devastated communities

Link: Airports close

Nathan Heffel, 2017. (joined Colorado Public Radio in 2015, bringing years of experience with public radio in Colorado. Most recently, he was host and reporter for KUNC in Greeley, Colo; his work has been recognized by the Associated Press, the Colorado Broadcasters Association and Public Radio News Directors Incorporated.) “Essential Air Service Remains Just That For Small Colorado Airports” APR 6, 2017. <http://www.cpr.org/news/story/essential-air-service-remains-essential-for-small-colorado-airports>

Cortez airport manager Russ Machen agreed: "If the EAS program were to be suspended, the airport as we know it would certainly end as well. At that point, it would be up to our airline, Boutique Air, to determine whether it would be financially viable to continue service at Cortez; and what level of service that would look like. At the end of the day, we know our citizens would be paying considerably more to fly, whether from the local airport or traveling by car to a more distant airport for a flight from there. The airport and community would surely suffer long term negative economic impacts as well."

Link: Tickets wouldn’t be affordable

Annie Zak, 2017. (covers business and general assignments for Anchorage Daily News, and Alaskan news service. She previously wrote for the Puget Sound Business Journal and the Orange County Register.) “Rural Alaska communities rely on this program for air travel. Now it might be going away.” April 9, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/aviation/2017/04/09/rural-alaska-communities-rely-on-this-program-for-air-travel-now-it-might-be-going-away/> (Parentheses in original)

"Of course, they're rallying all the other states too," he said. "(Without EAS), in many cases the seat tickets would have to be so high to remain profitable for the carrier, it wouldn't be affordable to passengers." There's no way to know how much of the subsidy is allocated specifically to ticket prices, Binder said, so it's hard to put a price tag on the impact for people in rural Alaska. But some rural Alaskans are quick to mention just how crucial the program is. Chris Emrich, the city administrator in the Aleutian Islands community of False Pass — population 35, according to the U.S. Census in 2010 — said even though he isn't a fan of government subsidies, he thinks getting rid of EAS would "kill Bush Alaska completely." "It makes year-round flights affordable, to make sure we get our mail and prescriptions — that's what makes that even remotely possible," Emrich said of the program. "Otherwise, it'd be basically charter services." To get from False Pass to Anchorage, Emrich said, residents need to first connect in Cold Bay. He said he's seen tickets as high as $900 to $1,000 for round-trip airfare to fly the 974 miles to the city. That's a comparable distance as flying from Chicago to Dallas.

Link: EAS provide critical link to outside world

Tony Grubesic, Ran Wei, Alan Murray, and Fangwu Wei, 2016. (International Regional Science Review. Tony: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA. Ran: University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. Alan: Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Fangwu: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA.) “Essential Air Service in the United States: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Spatial and Operational Efficiencies” 2016. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0160017614532653>

At the same time, there is no doubt that access to the commercial air transport system remains challenging, yet likely needed in a number of ways for rural and remote areas in the United States and elsewhere. By simply providing a higher level of accessibility from a rural community to larger metropolitan areas, one ingredient for economic growth is present. Further, not only does EAS provide a critical transportation link for rural communities to the outside world, the subsidized airfares facilitate an ease of movement that is not often found in midsized communities where ticket prices are higher. These ‘‘pockets of pain’’ emerge for a variety of reasons: geographic isolation, weak markets, carrier monopolies, and predatory behavior. Regardless of the specific problem, these issues generally serve to slow the degree of spatial interaction between places.

Link: Air travel vital for small Alaskan communities

Annie Zak, 2017. (covers business and general assignments for Anchorage Daily News, and Alaskan news service. She previously wrote for the Puget Sound Business Journal and the Orange County Register.) “Rural Alaska communities rely on this program for air travel. Now it might be going away.” April 9, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/aviation/2017/04/09/rural-alaska-communities-rely-on-this-program-for-air-travel-now-it-might-be-going-away/>

Trump's proposed budget blueprint calls for eliminating funding for the Essential Air Service program, which subsidizes flights around the country, allowing regular air service in communities where it otherwise wouldn't be economically viable. Used in about 60 Alaska communities, the program affects more parts of Alaska than any other state. In villages in the Aleutian Islands, Southeast and the rest of Alaska where there is no road to connect people to a larger hub where they can get medical care, prescriptions and groceries, air travel is a part of everyday life.

Brink: Alaska not connected to roads. 82% of Alaskan communities aren’t connected to roads

Annie Zak, 2017. (covers business and general assignments for Anchorage Daily News, and Alaskan news service. She previously wrote for the Puget Sound Business Journal and the Orange County Register.) “Rural Alaska communities rely on this program for air travel. Now it might be going away.” April 9, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/aviation/2017/04/09/rural-alaska-communities-rely-on-this-program-for-air-travel-now-it-might-be-going-away/>

About 82 percent of Alaska communities aren't connected to the road system, according to the state's transportation department. Of the 60-some locations served by the EAS program in Alaska, only six are connected to the road system, but all of the communities are remote. The six that are connected to the road system aren't necessarily conveniently linked: McCarthy, for example, has a road, but no road maintenance in the winter.

Brink: Alaska incomparable with other states

Annie Zak, 2017. (covers business and general assignments for Anchorage Daily News, and Alaskan news service. She previously wrote for the Puget Sound Business Journal and the Orange County Register.) “Rural Alaska communities rely on this program for air travel. Now it might be going away.” April 9, 2017. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/aviation/2017/04/09/rural-alaska-communities-rely-on-this-program-for-air-travel-now-it-might-be-going-away/>

In the past, Murkowski has said that the program is essential in Alaska, rather than a luxury, because of how unique the state's transportation system is. Emrich, in False Pass, doesn't think it even makes sense to compare Alaska towns that are served by EAS to towns in the Lower 48 that benefit from the subsidies. "To be on that same list, it's not even really the same ball game," he said. "It's the difference between convenient and quick, to even being possible."

Brink: Flights crucial for business

Pat Bradley, 2017. (North Country Bureau Chief for WAMC, a public radio network headquartered in New York.) “Proposed Cuts To Essential Air Service Concern North Country Airports” MAR 30, 2017. <http://wamc.org/post/proposed-cuts-essential-air-service-concern-north-country-airports>

PennAir operates subsidized flights from the Plattsburgh International Airport to Boston. Airport manager Chris Kreig explains that while two other airlines operate at the terminal PennAir is the only one that provides connecting flights to the national air transportation system. Kreig says that’s crucial for business. “One of the components to the current and future economic growth that’s as we bring in businesses ideally they want access to fly either employees or personnel in or out of the community to support their businesses. And companies look at that. I’ve had conversations with companies that potentially want to come up here and they’re looking for that ease of access into the community, into the region if they’re going to be conducting business up here. So certainly there’s an economic component to it and we certainly don’t want to lose that.”

Brink: Cities can’t compensate for lost funds

Nathan Heffel, 2017. (Nathan joined Colorado Public Radio in 2015, bringing years of experience with public radio in Colorado. Most recently, he was host and reporter for KUNC in Greeley, Colo., with an emphasis on coverage of transportation and public infrastructure. His work has been recognized by the Associated Press, the Colorado Broadcasters Association and Public Radio News Directors Incorporated. “Essential Air Service Remains Just That For Small Colorado Airports” APR 6, 2017. <http://www.cpr.org/news/story/essential-air-service-remains-essential-for-small-colorado-airports>

[Pueblo airport](https://www.flypueblo.com/) manager Ian Turner said losing the subsidies would significantly affect the airport. "It means less infrastructure improvements, it means less ability to maintain the current infrastructure we have," he said. "If there's no EAS subsidy, it would mean the end of [passenger] air service in Pueblo. I don't believe the city would be able to find the necessary funds to keep an airline flying to any destination from Pueblo."

Impact: Towns’ economies harmed

Pat Bradley, 2017. (North Country Bureau Chief for WAMC, a public radio network headquartered in New York.) “Proposed Cuts To Essential Air Service Concern North Country Airports” MAR 30, 2017. <http://wamc.org/post/proposed-cuts-essential-air-service-concern-north-country-airports>

Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism President Jim McKenna believes that proposed cuts to the Essential Air Service would impact the number of visitors to the Adirondacks. “We have to look at northern New York as one unit here. If EAS is eliminated the five airports that serve commercial interests north of Syracuse and north of Albany would all be affected and it would literally cut our region off from having any source of commercial air traffic in and out. And you look at Plattsburgh, you look at Massena, Ogdensburg, Watertown, and Adirondack Regional in Saranac Lake it’s got a pretty big impact for us. It’s going to have an effect on the car rental agencies, lodging industry, services, right down the line when we cut those things off.”

Impact: Vital for local economy

CBS News, 2015. (News broadcasting service.) “Is Essential Air Service wasting taxpayer money?” February 24, 2015. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/government-subsidized-essential-air-service-waste-of-taxpayer-money-some-say/>

Devils Lake mayor Dick Johnson said the flights attract business and he estimates they help inject $10 million a year into the local economy. "Our numbers are starting to go up; It's key to our cities," Johnson said. "I think small rural communities are a major part of our country and to keep them viable, to keep them functional, to keep them a viable community, sometimes you need to have help from the big communities."

Backup to “Flights cancelled”: Reasons why

GAO, 2006. (Government Accountability Office; GAO investigates federal spending and performance.) “Commercial Aviation: Programs and Options for the Federal Approach to Providing and Improving Air Service to Small” September 14, 2006 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-06-398T/html/GAOREPORTS-GAO-06-398T.htm>

Several factors may help explain why some small communities, especially nonhubs, face relatively limited air service. First, small communities can become cost-cutting targets of air carriers because they are often a carrier's least profitable operation. Consequently, many network carriers have cut service to small communities and regional carriers now operate at many small communities where the network carriers have withdrawn. Second, the "Commuter Rule" that FAA enacted in 1995 brought small commuter aircraft under the same safety standards as larger aircraft-a change that made it more difficult to economically operate smaller aircraft, such as 19-seat turboprops. For example, the Commuter Rule required commuter air carriers who flew aircraft equipped with 10 or more seats to improve ground deicing programs and carry additional passenger safety equipment. Additionally, the 2001 Aviation and Transportation Security Act instituted the same security requirements for screening passengers at smaller airports as it did for larger airports, sometimes making travel from small airports less convenient than it had been. Third, regional carriers had reduced the use of turboprops in favor of regional jets, which had a negative effect on small communities that have not generated the passenger levels needed to support regional jet service. Finally, many small communities experience passenger "leakage"-that is, passengers choosing to drive longer distances to larger airports instead of using closer small airports. Low-cost carriers have generally avoided flying to small communities but have offered low fares that encourage passengers to drive longer distances to take advantage of them.

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