

**BEFORE THE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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<b>REVISION OF AIRLINE SERVICE</b>	)	
<b>QUALITY PERFORMANCE REPORTS</b>	)	<b>Docket No. OST-2007-28522</b>
<b>and</b>	)	
<b>DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS</b>	)	
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**COMMENTS OF THE  
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL AGENTS, INC.**

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This data may be hard to collect, as the Air Transport Association (ATA) claims, but every effort should be made to get it so that the manner in which these events occur, and their impact on the public, can be better understood.

While we favor the earliest possible adoption of the proposed rules, recognizing there will be a gap before actual reporting can begin, we continue to believe, as we argued in Congressional testimony in April, 2007, that DOT-led “government-industry” talks on these types of issues would be valuable, as suggested by ATA in its August 7, 2007 letter to the Department (filed in this docket). However, as a full and active party to the Air Carrier On-time Reporting Advisory Committee, we have some concerns about description of the ATA offer in the NPRM. It is there referred to as an “industry working group comprised of DOT and interested carrier officials,” a group described as “much like the group that successfully collaborated on the reporting of the causes of delay.”

We have previously noted that the Advisory Committee was not just a group of DOT staff and airline executives. Numerous other interests, including travel agents (represented by ASTA), were fully involved in those deliberations. Our Congressional testimony stated,<sup>1</sup> as one of the fundamental recommendations to address the unresolved passenger rights issues of the past decade and a half, that

The most valuable service that DOT can perform in the short term is to establish and manage a joint fact-finding process....

.... a workable number of representatives of legitimately interested and responsible parties should be convened under DOT auspices in this case to develop a factual understanding of what has happened and why it has happened. Joint fact finding in this context does not require that the

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of the American Society of Travel Agents, Inc. Before The United States House of Representatives Committee On Transportation And Infrastructure, Subcommittee On Aviation, on “Aviation Consumer Issues,” April 20, 2007 at 5-6.

airlines give up any power they currently have, nor does it require that consumers be subjected to unilateral outcomes dictated by the airlines. It does mean, however, that the process should not be limited to insiders such as the airlines and the government.

To achieve legitimacy among all constituencies and to assure that all relevant issues are addressed, joint fact finding managed by DOT must include representatives of: consumers and travel agents, along with the airlines, airports and the FAA. This task will be materially assisted, of course, by the work of the independent Inspector General but there will almost certainly be questions that are not covered by the report. Those questions should be the subject of joint fact-finding in which the airlines participate fully with the other interested parties.<sup>2/</sup>

As these issues continue to demand public and government attention, the approach we recommended now seems acceptable to the airlines and remains, in our view and subject to the major qualification regarding the composition of the group, the best path forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL AGENTS, INC.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Paul M. Ruden

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<sup>2</sup> ATA has repeatedly declined ASTA's offers to meet and discuss solutions to these issues. We doubt they would refuse an offer from DOT. What is critical is that all the parties be together in the discussions. This has been done before with success on issues such as reporting of on-time performance, so we are confident it can work here.