

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5401**

November 1, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable J. Randolph Babbitt  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Babbitt:

I write to respectfully request that you expedite consideration of the application filed by Air Charter Inc. d/b/a Air Flamenco, dated October 13, 2010, to obtain certification as a commuter carrier under Part 135 of the Federal Aviation Regulations. Air Flamenco currently operates as an on-demand carrier. As you know, carriers with this status may operate their aircraft on a charter basis only, outside normal schedules, pursuant to a hiring arrangement with a particular customer or group of customers. Certification as a commuter carrier will enable Air Flamenco, which has ably served Puerto Rico for over a decade, to sell tickets directly to passengers on scheduled flights between mainland Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican island municipalities of Vieques and Culebra.

Prompt attention to this application is both necessary and appropriate, given the vital role played by Air Flamenco in the transportation of passengers and goods from mainland Puerto Rico to Vieques and Culebra, and vice versa. Vieques is located eight miles off the east coast of mainland Puerto Rico, and is home to approximately 10,000 full-time residents. Culebra is located 17 miles east of mainland Puerto Rico—and about nine miles north of Vieques—and is home to about 2,000 full-time residents. Several factors, ranging from the islands' long use as military training ranges to their isolated geographic locations, have combined to create challenging economic conditions for the people of Vieques and Culebra. Many residents of these two islands travel to mainland Puerto Rico to obtain certain essential goods and services, including medical care. At the same time, both islands are popular tourist destinations, frequented by residents of mainland Puerto Rico and visitors from the 50 states and abroad.

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Residents of Vieques and Culebra headed to mainland Puerto Rico, and tourists traveling to the two islands, have only two choices for transportation: ferry or airplane. The Puerto Rico Maritime Transportation Authority, an agency within the Department of Transportation and Public Works, operates daily ferry service between Fajardo, on the northeast coast of mainland Puerto Rico, and the two islands. There are only several scheduled trips each day, and launches can be delayed or canceled due to mechanical, weather or other reasons. Travel by ferry takes considerably longer than travel by plane. With respect to air carriers, only a handful of companies other than Air Flamenco serve the Vieques and Culebra market on a regular basis.

For all the foregoing reasons, and to ensure that travel between mainland Puerto Rico and Vieques and Culebra is not disrupted, I respectfully request that you expedite consideration of Air Flamenco's application for commuter certification.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Member of Congress