
MICHAEL A. TROUP
MAYOR



CITY HALL
EST. 1840

August 21, 2024

Michael Martin
United States Department of Transportation
Office of Aviation Analysis
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Michael,

I am sending you this letter to provide additional information from my previous June 20, 2024 letter, regarding our experiences at Quincy Regional Airport with Southern Airways Express. Attached please find a letter written by our Interim Airport Director, Tairu Zong. Our Aeronautics Committee directed me to contact you and your office and to request that we work to remove Southern Airway as our carrier and search for a replacement air carrier to serve Quincy Regional Airport.

In addition to the items outlined in the attached letter, I also met this week with a former employee from Southern Airways here in Quincy. This former employee confirmed the items presented in the attached report and also shared several situations that he had with passengers, including a group of seven unrelated passengers who were stranded in Quincy due to a Southern cancellation. The employee attempted to obtain hotel rooms for the passengers, but only two were successful. He reported this to his Florida based management, and they rejected his plea stating that he would be fired if he continued sharing Southern's policy information on support due to cancellations with passengers. This was not a unique situation for this employee while working for Southern in Quincy.

I also learned from a former Southern employee how they were directed to weight-balance the aircraft. Several flights had higher weight than allowed with passengers and luggage, but the employees were shown how to reduce passengers' weight and luggage weight until the weight total was green, allowing the flight record to show it was a safe weight to fly. Southern had a plan land hard due to weight and the wheels bent resulting in the aircraft landing on the belly of the plane. This occurred at another airport, but the Quincy based employee was made aware and was told it was due to an overweight situation of the aircraft. As I heard this, I became extremely concerned with passenger safety. If an airline cuts this safety issue, what other safety issues are they ignoring?

When Southern received money from corporate sale and other financing arrangements, a significant amount of funds was paid out in bonuses and fees to senior executives who were released after the latest purchase of Southern. Given all the documented operational issues, is that the best use of their limited funds?

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I recently contacted one of our community's travel agency owners and sought her thoughts and experiences with Southern. They stated that their clients have lost faith in Southern's ability to meet most of Southern's flight schedules. Most of the agency clients who travel through St. Louis have returned to driving to St. Louis to start flights there instead of gambling (and most of the time losing) or missing their connecting flights. Their agency also supports us looking to find a replacement airline willing to serve our regional passengers.

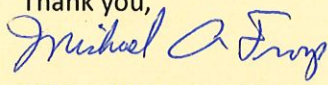
Although the City of Quincy administration continued scheduling conference calls with Southern, most of these calls were cancelled by Southern or only a marketing support employee was on the calls. This has been since the initial letter I sent you was shared with Southern and was discussed with them in detail.

The Southern management team on that call agreed that we had previously discussed those issues with them numerous times, and they also agreed that many of those items were unacceptable by any airline, they questioned if we would provide them time to make improvements. We discussed what time schedule, and we clearly stated that we needed to see immediate improvements no matter how small over days and weeks before we could agree with any longer period of time without any specific improvement objectives. As of today, we still have not received any proposed listing of improvements.

Based on the subpar performance, continued reduction of completed scheduled flights, and lack of reliability for the traveling public with scheduled flights, we request that your office work with Quincy Regional Airport to replace Southern Airways with another regional airline. As part of this request, we understand the need to maintain Southern as our airline until we can select qualified and reliable airline interested in serving Quincy, Illinois.

I am disappointed that we have reached this point. Having discussed these issues with our Airport Management team, our local Travel Agencies, and the city's Aeronautics Committee, we have reached the conclusion that Southern has not delivered the type of air service that they presented to us while being selected to serve Quincy. Southern has proven that they are not capable or willing to improve these most significant issues that we have discussed on a regular basis, and we have determined that they have no interest in servicing Quincy or our traveling passengers. We hope you will support our request to collaborate towards changing our EAS carrier as soon as possible to return safe, reliable air service to and from Quincy Regional Airport.

I am happy to schedule a call with you and others as you may desire to further discuss these issues and next steps.

Thank you,

Michael A. Troup, Mayor