
MICHAEL A. TROUP
MAYOR



CITY HALL
EST. 1840

June 20, 2024

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

Dear Mr. Martin,

I am writing this letter to you as a follow up to our brief telephone conversation that we had on June 12, 2024. In this call, I introduced you to our interim Airport Director Mr. Tairu Zong. The main purpose of this call was to introduce you to what we believe continue to be significant issues that we face with Southern Airways Express (SAE). Despite numerous communications and attempts to resolve these issues, SAE's performance has continued to deteriorate, causing substantial disruptions and dissatisfaction among passengers and staff. In sharing these issues with our Aeronautics Committee, they directed us to provide you and your office with this information.

Our dissatisfaction with SAE's performance revolves around several key areas: unexpected changes in flight schedules, passenger inconvenience due to unscheduled stops, and inadequate handling of maintenance and weather delays. Below are some examples:

1. **Frequent Last-Minute Changes to Flight Schedules:** Concerns have been raised by the TSA regarding SAE's frequent last-minute changes to flight times. These changes often occur outside our operational hours, forcing TSA staff to stay beyond their scheduled times, sometimes until midnight, only to have the flight canceled at the last moment. This has resulted in significant strain on our staffing and budget, as we lack the resources to continue to accommodate these changes. TSA management has instructed staff to screen passengers who then must wait in the sterile area due to these schedule changes. This situation has led to passengers being stranded without prior notice, either at our airport or at other locations like the Southeast Iowa Regional Airport in Burlington. For example, in the past month alone, there have been at least two instances where passengers were stuck in Burlington or at our airport due to maintenance issues or weather delays. In these cases, it also brings into question if SAE is *actually* operating under the contract that you issued them for nonstop flights between Quincy and Chicago O'Hare. Additionally, the stops to Burlington add travel time for our passengers at a minimum.

730 MAINE
QUINCY, IL 62301-4056
217.228.4545
QUINCYIL.GOV



2. Enplanement and Completion Rate Issues: According to 2023 and 2024 airport enplanement and completion rates, in 2023, there was a significant number of cancellations and delays, with the completion rate falling far below acceptable levels. This trend has continued into 2024, further eroding passenger confidence and satisfaction. A completion rate significantly lower than the proposed benchmarks, with a high frequency of flight cancellations and delays.

3. Passenger Dissatisfaction: Passengers have reported numerous complaints regarding the reliability of SAE's services. Common issues include lack of notification for schedule changes, unscheduled stops that passengers were not informed about, and inadequate handling of delays and cancellations. These issues have resulted in a loss of confidence among our community members and frequent frustration from stranded passengers. As these negatively impacted passengers have requested ticket refunds for cancelled flights, SAE has generally ignored these requests, further complicating the relationship with our flying passengers.

4. Aircraft Supply and Maintenance Issues: Constant maintenance issues continue to be another factor negatively affecting Quincy Regional Airport. Early on, SAE indicated that a spare aircraft would be housed in Quincy to work around potential maintenance issues. This was never put in place. In subsequent meetings with SAE executives, they reported that the spare aircraft would be in St. Louis for availability to Quincy as well as other SAE served airports. Additionally, SAE reported on their purchasing of new aircraft and that Quincy would receive one of the first to arrive. We have learned that the new aircraft has arrived, but it is being used at the new Indiana airport that SAE recently contracted with instead.

I appreciate you taking time to review these notes and issues. Thank you for your review and consideration of these significant issues that we have been experiencing without any end in sight. I look forward to hearing from you and to discussing what changes and actions are available to improve the regional air service to and from Quincy Regional Airport.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Troup

Mayor