

September 23, 2010

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

Dear Secretary LaHood,

In parallel to the efforts of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), Business Travel Coalition (BTC) and Consumer Travel Alliance (CTA), we at UNIGLOBE Travel put forth a letter on the issue of access to airline ancillary fee data for travel agents and corporate travel departments.

On September 16, we circulated a request to support our letter to about 80 UNIGLOBE Travel agency owners and managers. In the brief time that this letter was available, 109 individuals indicated their support, with more indicating their agreement, but that they had already signed the Mad As Hell campaign petition (we requested that individuals not sign both).

The text of our letter was as follows:

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 2059

Dear Secretary LaHood,

We the undersigned corporate travel managers and travel management company executives urge you through your currently open Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) to enact rules that allow travelers and corporate travel departments to have full visibility and access to airline ancillary content through any booking channel in which the airline distributes its fares.

While airlines are required to disclose optional fees through their websites (and do so in a less than transparent manner), the majority of tickets are sold through other channels. Traditional travel agencies and online travel websites transact with the airlines through global distribution systems (GDSs). We believe that the NRRM should include language that requires airlines to make their fee information available in any GDS in which the

airline chooses to participate, and that such fees should be bookable by the travel agency or online agency to the extent that they may be purchased in advance on the airline website.

Such a rule will provide clarity to travelers in their travel purchasing decisions. The technology infrastructure to enable these processes either exists today or will be available before the year-end. Functionality is not holding airlines back from engaging in such disclosure and access, but rather the fear of competitive disadvantage. Spirit Airlines CEO Ben Baldanza admitted precisely that during Congressional testimony on July 14 of this year.

As no airline will willingly be the first mover on this issue, government regulation remains the required step to protect consumer interests. A recent U.S. General Accountability Office report to Congress agrees, concluding that airlines are not likely to disclose these fees unless compelled to do so.


Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your untiring leadership on behalf of the airline industry consumer, including the business traveler and the companies that fund business travel activities.

Sincerely,

NOTE: Please only sign this petition if you have NOT also signed the petition at: www.madashellabouthiddenfees.com

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We respectfully request that the Department adopt a final rule that directs the airlines to provide timely, complete and transactable ancillary service and fee data to the GDSs for distribution to travel agents and corporate travel departments that rely upon them.

Regards,



Andrew Henry
VP, US Operations

U.S. Dept of Transportation Signatory Letter on Airline Fees – Signature List

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