

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

September 20, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of Yakima Air Terminal's application to the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Terminal Program grant program. Yakima Air Terminal is seeking \$1,250,000 for its Passenger Baggage Claim Modernization Project.

Yakima has been the cultural, business, educational, health services, and governmental focal point of the Central Washington region since it was founded more than 125 years ago. Yakima is now home to just under 100,000 residents and has grown from its agricultural roots to become a metropolitan city. The Yakima Air Terminal, first constructed in 1950, provides \$591 million in economic impact and 2,366 jobs to the city and the surrounding rural counties. However, despite two remodels the baggage claim system at Yakima Air Terminal is an archaic steel slide. Passengers with disabilities, in particular, struggle to retrieve their bags. Additionally, the uninsulated baggage chute opening lets in frigid cold in the winter and unconditioned heat in the summer, increasing airport costs and lowering passenger experience when they travel through their local airport. Airports are critical to local economies, which Congress recognized when it provided funding for air travel infrastructure nationwide as part of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—including investing \$5 billion in the Airport Terminal Program.

If successful, Yakima Air Terminal will use Airport Terminal Program funding to replace the legacy slide baggage chute with a new moving baggage carousel. At 15" high, bags will be more readily accessible to passengers and will not log-jam, as occurs with the current slide. This project will enhance air travel in the Yakima Valley and support continued growth of the airport, helping the Yakima economy grow and improving business travel and the attractiveness of the community to new business. With the second set of flights recently added, and ongoing improvements throughout the airport, it will be more attractive for passengers to travel through their local hometown airport rather than driving to Seattle. This project will also result in \$2.13 million in economic impact and 13 project-related construction jobs.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of Yakima Air Terminal's application to the Airport Terminal Program grant program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell

United States Senator