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REMARKS PREPARED FOR
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
AT THE NATIONAL/DULLES AIRPORTS BRIEFING
JUNE 20, 1985
WASHINGTON, D.C.

I appreciate this opportunity to express my commitment to the transfer of Washington National and Washington Dulles International Airports to a regional authority.

This is an action in the interests of good government and efficient service for the region.

The transfer will provide the Washington airports a financial declaration of independence from the federal budgeting process. The new, independent regional authority will be able to raise needed capital from private sources through the sale of revenue bonds, and, like other major airports around the nation, they'll support through the Airport Improvement Program. The airports will be freed from captivity to the unwieldy system of getting their appropriations as line items in each year's federal budget. They will be able to finance improvements to facilities relatively quickly. The status quo, on the other hand, at this time of necessary concern about federal deficits, threatens to stall airport improvements.

Under an independent authority, Dulles International Airport would more readily be able to develop a new midfield terminal to accommodate rapidly growing demand. More parking could be provided as well. Dulles could fulfill its potential as a major aviation hub. At National, the terminal could be refurbished, the roadway improved, adequate parking provided and a connector built to the metro stop. I frankly cannot see such improvements taking place very readily if we do not change the status quo. For this reason it is critical that we pull out all the stops to ensure that the consensus we've already built carries the day in Congress.

This is the moment we must seize. Momentum with us. Many prior attempts to transfer the airports have failed, but this time there is a critical difference.

Only one year ago this month, I asked Governor Holton to chair a commission to tell me not whether to transfer these airports but how to transfer them to an independent authority more attuned to the needs of the region. I am absolutely convinced this is the right thing to do if we want 1st class facilities and after all, National and Dulles are the only airports in the country operated by the federal government.

The Commission was organized with members from such users as the aircraft and air carrier industries, local officials, members of Congress, and a representative of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The Commission conducted unlimited discussions and made every attempt to understand and respond to all points of view. The Holton Commission's diligent effort brought about a thoughtful and powerful consensus. It produced a superb plan for transferring the airports to a regional authority. I have translated that plan into legislation recently submitted to Congress, which is being sponsored by Senators Tribble, Warner and Danforth, and in the House by Representatives Wolf and Parris. And I think it's very significant that a majority of the Washington area communities and aviation groups that use and are affected by the airports have expressed their support for our bill.

I should add that the airports' employees -- whom I regard as the finest, most efficient airport workforce in our nation -- also will stand to benefit from the transfer. The legislation requires the authority to retain all employees in their present positions and at their present salaries for at least two years. Leave would carry over, equivalent health and life insurance programs would be provided and present employees would remain in the federal pension system.

The independent authority will manage the two airports as a unit, and through that coordination, provide the region with greater efficiency in economic development, promotion and passenger services. Both facilities would be operated as primary airports, and all their revenues would be dedicated to airport purposes.

The passenger cap at National Airport would be lifted, but a slot freeze would be imposed. You know of my desire to lower the passenger cap, to lessen noise and congestion and to promote more traffic into Dulles. The slot freeze will ensure no addition of flights into National. This position represents consensus between interested groups, and it is important to attaining our larger goal of transferring the airports.

The new authority will take over the proprietary rules, the perimeter rule, and the rule governing Dulles Access Road. The Authority will at the outset be given a 35-year lease for control of the airports, during which time Congress will retain an opportunity for oversight. Afterwards, the

airports will be transferred outright to the Authority. Regulation of air traffic and safety matters will always remain the authority of the Federal Aviation Administration.

I am very pleased that Virginia has already enacted legislation to create the Airports Authority, and the District of Columbia is now considering identical legislation.

I want to stress as strongly as possible that the airports and the community not only have much to gain from proposal, but also much to lose in prompt development of the airports' potential if we remain with the status quo. The time is ripe for this transfer. If Congress does not move forward with turning over the Washington-area airports to an independent authority, those airports will run a serious risk of being hampered in today's competitive air transportation market.

Again, delighted to be working with this great team.

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