



Department of Aviation

MAYOR

Oscar Leeser

May 19, 2023

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

CITY COUNCIL

District 1

Brian Kennedy

Re: Direct Flight Request from El Paso, Texas (ELP) to Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) and Exception to the FAA Perimeter Rule ([U.S. Code § 49109](#))

District 2

Alexsandra Anello

Dear Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

District 3

Cassandra Hernandez

I am writing to request your consideration for the addition of a direct flight from ELP to DCA as one of the exempted slots to the DCA Perimeter Rule ([U.S. Code § 49109](#)). ELP is the 22nd largest city in the Nation, and is in the top 20% in terms of economic performance. El Paso is also home to Ft. Bliss, the largest military training area in the United States. A direct flight from ELP to DCA would provide service to El Paso, TX and the West Texas Region.

District 4

Joe Molinar

District 5

Isabel Salcido

The existing perimeter rule, established in 1966, aimed to manage air traffic congestion around the Nation's Capital and support the growth of nearby Dulles Airport. The original rule limited non-stop services to DCA to 650 statute miles but was expanded in 1986 to 1,250 statute miles unless there is a noted exemption. There are currently 10 exemptions.

District 6

Art Fierro

District 7

Henry Rivera

District 8

Chris Canales

The City of El Paso is requesting an exemption to [U.S. Code § 49109](#) based on the following rationale:

1. **Passenger Demand:** There is a significant demand for air travel between El Paso, TX and Washington, D.C. On average 300 daily travelers must route through other cities to travel to and from El Paso to Washington, D.C. Nearly four of every ten beyond-perimeter passengers must connect when traveling from Washington, D.C.—almost 2x the rate for other top metros. There is a correlation between air service and total employment in metropolitan areas; a 10% increase in passenger traffic raises total employment by 0.9%. Air traffic changes also have a positive and significant effect on the growth in the number of local businesses; a 50% increase in air passenger growth rate led to a 5.5% increase in the annual rate of employment, on average. An average of 50% increase in the air passenger growth rate led to a 3.2% increase in the annual rate of per capita income growth. Airports like EPIA have contributed an average of 3.9% growth in total employment and 3.4% growth in population over a 10-year period. A metropolitan area like El Paso with an extra destination, have the potential to create 223 jobs and 15 new business establishments.
2. **Airline Competitiveness:** The perimeter rule restricts competition between airlines and limits the number of destinations available to travelers. This can lead to higher fares and less

CITY MANAGER

Tommy Gonzalez



EL PASO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Sam Rodriguez, PE, CM, cfm, cnu-a
Aviation Director

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DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES



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convenient travel options. El Paso's nearest major airport not subject to the DCA perimeter rule is in Austin, which is almost 600 miles away. This means that passengers traveling to and from El Paso must either make a connecting flight in Dallas or take a much longer ground transportation route to Washington, D.C. Existing perimeter rule costs passengers \$500M in higher ticket prices and 95% of beyond-perimeter markets are underserved. Several major airlines currently servicing ELP have expressed their commitment to operate a non-stop flight from ELP to DCA upon receiving an exemption to the DCA Perimeter Rule. Authorizing more in- and beyond-perimeter slots to DCA would save consumers an average of \$60 per ticket and allow more than 2,000 passengers per day to be connected by non-stop flights to beyond-perimeter markets.

3. Government Benefits: The El Paso region is home to the two largest DoD installations, Fort Bliss, and White Sands Missile Range. Ft. Bliss employs approximately 156,000 military and civilian personnel, which could benefit from non-stop flight service to DCA. El Paso also is also a major operation hub for other Federal Agencies like the U.S. Border Patrol Special Operations Group, Joint Task Force North, and the El Paso Intelligence Center.
4. Rationale Change: Section 49019 is now obsolete. The DCA perimeter rule was established 55 years ago and, therefore, does not consider today's airframes that are more fuel-efficient, quieter and have longer ranges than aircraft that were available when the rule was adopted. As a result, there is no safety or environmental reason prohibit non-stop flights to and from El Paso, TX.

In conclusion, the City of El Paso is requesting an exemption to U.S. Code § 49109 that would allow for non-stop flights between ELP and DCA. The region's significant military presence, Federal Agencies, and airline competitiveness would all benefit from such a change. Additionally, modern airline technologies make non-stop flights both safe and environmentally sound. We ask the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to consider this request to support federal legislation that would allow a "beyond-perimeter" exemption for El Paso. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Sam Rodriguez, PE
Aviation Director



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