



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, DC 20515

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

John L. Mica
Ranking Republican Member

August 6, 2009

David Heymsfeld, Chief of Staff
Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW – Room 7000
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Many airlines have unbundled their passenger fares by adopting “a la carte” pricing plans, which includes additional fees for checked baggage, beverages and specific seats. According to Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), U.S. airlines collected \$1.1 billion in excess baggage fees alone in fiscal year (FY) 2008. In addition, BTS recently reported that in the first quarter of FY 2009, airlines made over \$400 million in change ticket and cancellation fees. We are concerned that these fees may be excessive and that they are resulting in revenue being diverted from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

We request that the Government Accountability Office undertake a study that looks at the following: (1) what additional fees airlines are charging passengers and the price, including fuel surcharges; (2) whether additional fees, including baggage, fuel surcharges, and change ticket/cancellation fees, are commensurate with the cost of providing those services to passengers; (3) delays in the delivery of checked baggage to passengers; (4) airline standards to compensate passengers in the case of unreasonable delays of the receipt of checked baggage, taking into consideration that many carriers are charging checked baggage fees; and (5) if and how the amount of checked baggage has changed since fees were instituted. In addition, we request that you study ways that Congress can effectively capture these fees for the Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

If, in the course of your work, you identify other relevant issues that you believe the Congress should be aware of, we would like you to include them in your analysis. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Laurie Bertenthal, Legislative Assistant, Subcommittee on Aviation at (202) 225-9161.

Sincerely,

James L. Oberstar
Chairman, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure

Jerry F. Costello
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation