

BROAD SUPPORT FOR ATI APPLICATION

Nearly 3,400 letters from business and consumer groups, airport officials and politicians from across the United States have been sent to the US Department of Transportation (DOT) supporting British Airways' plans for a transatlantic joint business with American Airlines and Iberia.

The three airlines, along with fellow **oneworld** members Finnair and Royal Jordanian, have applied for anti-trust immunity from the US DOT and are seeking regulatory approval from the European Union. Approval would establish fair competition with the other global alliances Star and SkyTeam which already have transatlantic anti-trust immunity.

The joint business will also provide customers with greater access to discounted fares, smoother connections and more frequent-flyer benefits.

The DOT's public comment period on the application ended yesterday (May 18). In total, 3,380 letters were received from 499 US politicians and officials, 129 US airports, 521 corporations and small businesses plus 615 travel industry organisations and 365 non-profit organisations and chambers of commerce.

One of many political supporters, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin, said: "Approval of American Airlines, British Airways and Iberia's pending application will give consumers more travel choices and increase competition for international travel."

British Airways' chief executive Willie Walsh said: "This is overwhelming evidence of the broad base of support for our joint business across the United States and contrasts strongly with the lone airline voice of opposition to our application. We are confident that the US DOT will grant us the approval that we need to bring benefits to customers and create a level playing field among global airline alliances."

The US DOT will issue its decision on the airlines' application by October 31, 2009 and it is anticipated that the European Union process will be concluded by the year end. Details of the application and a list of support letters filed with the DOT are available at www.moretravelchoices.com

ends

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