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**Press Release** | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

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WASHINGTON, DC—Today, Congressmen Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) introduced legislation that would enable Del Norte County to receive the federal funds needed to improve the Del Norte County Airport without raising matching funds. The legislation follows up on a commitment made by DeFazio and Thompson at meetings held in Crescent City and Brookings, Oregon last fall, to help with improvements to the regional airport. Local officials have long expressed their concern that they are not able to meet the 10 percent match requirement for federal grant funds. The Del Norte County Airport is a regional facility used by residents of Del Norte and Curry Counties.

“This bill makes sure that counties like Del Norte aren’t disadvantaged by their size or economic factors when trying to improve the airports their citizens rely on,” said Thompson. “Rural areas like the North Coast can’t be expected to raise the type of funds that cities like San Francisco or LA can, but that doesn’t mean they shouldn’t get the assistance for improving their airports. Our legislation will make sure Del Norte County Airport gets the funding it needs to build a new terminal and make runway improvements.”

“Access to air service is essential in rural areas to connect individuals and to allow for economic development,” DeFazio said. “I am pleased to support this legislation, which will help the Del Norte County Airport overcome the current barriers to federal funding and improve air service for residents of Del Norte and Curry Counties.”

Specifically, the bill waives the federal grant matching requirements for rural municipalities with certain economic factors, such as per capita income and unemployment rate. These municipalities can qualify for airport improvement funds without matching 10 percent of the grant amount. Thompson and DeFazio wrote this legislation because it is often extremely difficult for counties like Del Norte to raise the matching funds, which bars them from receiving the much-needed transportation grants.

“This legislation puts Del Norte County on the right path,” said Del Norte County Supervisor Martha McClure. “It will not only save the county money, but it will, more importantly, save us time - we’ll be able to begin the project without having to delay to raise the funds. It will be miraculous!”

**Background:**

Del Norte County Airport is designated as an Essential Air Service (EAS) airport because it is small and in a rural area. All EAS airports are eligible for Airport Improvement Program grants from the federal government. However, under current law, EAS airports cannot receive the federal grants unless they match 10 percent of the grant. DeFazio and Thompson’s bill would

exempt all EAS airports in “economically disadvantaged” communities from the matching requirement.

The Economic Development Administration defines an “economically disadvantaged” community as one where the unemployment rate for the last 2 years is at least 1 percent greater than the national average unemployment rate or capital income is 80 percent or less of the national average per capital income.

DeFazio and Thompson’s bill also provides exemption to airports that have special needs as a result of severe short or long-term conditions, such as a military base closure or a natural disaster.