



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1805

March 14, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Michael P. Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20591

RE: Santa Monica Municipal Airport Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Huerta:

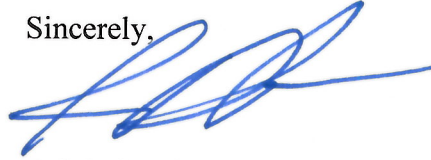
I am writing to express deep concern and to ask for clarifications about the agreement that the FAA has entered into with the City of Santa Monica (City), dated January 30, 2017. The agreement allows the City to immediately impose certain restrictions at Santa Monica Municipal Airport (SMO) including a significant reduction in the length of the runway, and to close the airport in its entirety at the end of 2028. I understand the agreement is currently the subject of litigation; however, I would appreciate a written response addressing my concerns no later than April 4, 2017.

From my perspective, this agreement departs from the long-standing principle that the federal government will preserve airport infrastructure and hold airport sponsors accountable, especially when they have accepted federal money and committed to deed-based obligations to operate the airport in perpetuity. The FAA recently affirmed that the City's obligations under Airport Improvement Program grants endure until 2023, and for decades has taken the position that the 1948 Instrument of Transfer between the federal government and the City obligates SMO in perpetuity. The Agency's Congressionally-authorized mission includes ensuring that airports remain safe and efficient while also protecting our entire aviation system. This agreement not only appears to take the opposite approach, but to be inconsistent with agency and Congressional requirements that changes to airport obligations be fully publicized and documented. I would appreciate a thorough explanation of the FAA's apparent departure from this mission.

Further, this deal comes at a time when the President has made clear that the renewal of and investment in infrastructure is a top priority for the Administration. SMO is a vital asset, both nationally and locally – for example, as a reliever for Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and as a critical component of City and state emergency plans. Could you provide any analysis that the FAA has utilized or prepared regarding the consequences of its actions, such as the negative impact on other airports, area residents, businesses, general aviation, the flying public, and the national aviation system?

The FAA's concessions regarding SMO send the wrong message to the airport sponsors in my district and across the country that are closely monitoring the situation, and are interested in imposing restrictions at or closing their own airports. Thank you for providing me with written answers to my questions and requests for other material that will help me understand how this agreement came about and the reasons the FAA seems to have departed from its statutory mandate to preserve and protect federal investments in airport infrastructure with consideration for our nation's aviation system as a whole.

Sincerely,



Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
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The Honorable Frank A. LoBiondo
Chairman
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2165 Rayburn House Office Building
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The Honorable Rick Larsen
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