



July 26, 2001

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thirty-two years ago, the United States landed the first astronauts on the moon. Because of the focused efforts and cooperation put forth by various groups, this tremendous feat took only eight years from President Kennedy's historic pledge to Neil Armstrong's giant leap. In contrast, today's bureaucracy and regulatory red tape can delay more modest, yet crucial runway construction projects at airports for up to 15 years. The resulting lack of adequate airport capacity creates lengthy delays for air travelers and system users resulting in negative impacts to the economy.

Mr. President, the world's most accessible and efficient aviation system faces an infrastructure crisis unless we act now. Given government forecasts that estimate one billion passenger enplanements by 2010, and a project review process that results in lengthy delays in upgrading airport infrastructure to meet that demand, the aviation system will slide into gridlock in the next decade if measures to increase and speed capacity improvements do not receive immediate attention and support from the Bush Administration, Congress, and the entire aviation community.

The aviation community is as multifaceted as the dilemma we are confronting, but we have always shared a common goal -- to safely meet the evolving and ever-increasing demand for air transportation. Today, this community reached a consensus on the actions needed to achieve that goal. Representatives from each major facet of the aviation community met to determine the most effective means to resolve this airport capacity crisis before its devastating economic implications come to bear on the nation's economy. We concluded that a three-part strategy focusing on concrete actions to address capacity and infrastructure, ATC modernization and investment, and long-term funding is an appropriate course of action.

First, capacity is more than runways. Capacity can be affected by the ATC system as well as the levels of funding committed to various projects. Americans rely on air travel; therefore, we must build the necessary infrastructure to support the economic needs of the United States and to maintain the quality of life the public has come to expect. Aviation delays are caused, in part, by inadequate runway, taxiway, and gate space at our nation's busiest airports.



Help for congestion and the mismatch between passenger demands and airport capacity is available in capacity enhancement plans put together by many of our nation's busiest airports. Given that the top 25 airports represent 90 percent of the delays in the system, measures to expedite these projects promise to offer the single greatest benefit to travelers and system performance. These top 25 airports are also supported by a robust system of secondary and reliever airports. Many of these "reliever" facilities are under threat of closure, and need protections for better land use laws.

The Bush Administration and Congress should ensure that the environmental review process identifies real concerns, but is not used as a tool to unreasonably delay new runways and other vital capacity enhancements. Also, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Transportation should become more vocal in their advocacy of new runway capacity where it is most needed.

Second, but just as importantly, we must accelerate efforts to modernize air traffic control equipment and methods while maintaining our absolute commitment to safety. Significant improvements have been made in the past several years, but more needs to be done. As the FAA's air traffic control systems continue to be modernized, congestion will be relieved and delays will become less frequent, but this effort must be expedited to meet ever-growing demand.

Modernization programs that increase capacity and reduce delays should be given high priority over a five-year timetable, including the full-scale implementation of Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite Navigation, En Route Software and Hardware (HOST Computer) Upgrades, Airspace Redesign, Choke Point Initiatives that continue access by all system users, Wake Turbulence Detection at major airports, Controller-Pilot Data Link Communication, other Free Flight Phase I and II technologies, continued development and deployment of Safe Flight 21 Initiatives, such as ADS-B, and proper staffing of air traffic controllers.

These technology initiatives hold the promise of significantly increasing safety, as well as capacity. For example, many of these technologies can be used to address the very real problem of runway safety and situational awareness.

Finally, maintaining consistent, long-term federal investment in the aviation system is critical. The continuation of AIR-21 funding levels is imperative. This funding, the vast majority of which derives directly from aviation system users, is what supports the addition of airport infrastructure and air traffic modernization. In addition to AIR-21, adequate funding of the NASA aeronautics programs must be assured. This will ensure on-going technological innovation and capacity building in the areas of noise and emissions reductions and evolution of the air traffic system. We must continue the momentum gained through AIR-21, and extend the use of present aviation taxes to produce predictable funding levels over the long term. This is key to getting the necessary corrective steps accomplished. Guaranteed funding levels for aviation capital programs should be continued and increased to meet our system's ever-growing needs.

We respectfully urge the Bush Administration to make aviation capacity enhancements a top national priority, by working with the aviation community to ensure that America's air transport system has the airport capacity, modern air traffic management technology and procedures, and long-term investment necessary to foster the maintenance of safe and efficient air transportation system.

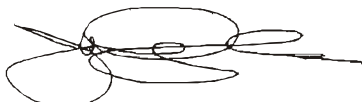
Sincerely,



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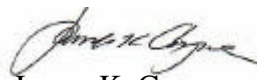
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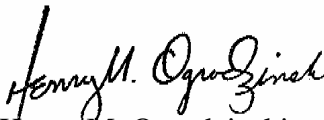
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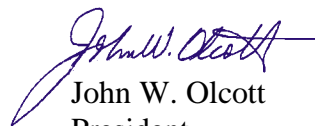
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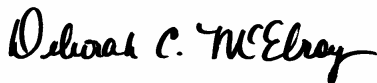
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