



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

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Washington, DC 20515

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Misleading Statements Don't Help the Case for ATC Privatization

Dear Colleague:

We write to draw your attention to the following letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal, which ran in today's paper. The letter corrects several inaccuracies and misstatements that have crept into arguments to privatize the Federal Aviation Administration's air traffic control (ATC) system.

Last Congress, a controversial proposal to privatize air traffic control killed an otherwise bipartisan Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill, and it threatens to do so again.

Privatization will delay the FAA's work to modernize the ATC system, known as NextGen, and jeopardize the programs' estimated \$161 billion in benefits by 2030; convey to a private entity, for free, assets in which taxpayers have invested more than \$50 billion; and require an expensive and cumbersome workaround simply to pass constitutional muster.

The facts don't support privatizing the ATC system. Relying on misleading statements, such as those that appeared in a recent Wall Street Journal editorial, do nothing to help the case of those who support privatization.

For more information, please contact Alex Burkett, Democratic staff director of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Aviation Subcommittee, at alex.burkett@mail.house.gov or extension 6-8779.

Sincerely,

PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

RICK LARSEN
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Aviation

TEXT OF LETTER:

Your editorial "Major Trump to Ground Control" (March 23) states that "[p]ilots currently bounce from one radio point to the next, which can result in roundabout routes and wasted fuel." As a result of continuing Federal Aviation Administration work to modernize our air-traffic control system (ATC), the majority of U.S. flights navigate with reference to GPS waypoints and often fly straight-line routes from their origin to destination.

You state that "calls for change [to the air-traffic control system] are bipartisan."

No congressional Democrats have called for change, and in fact all Democrats and two Republicans on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee opposed a privatization proposal last year. Bipartisan House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders also opposed it, and House Ways and Means Committee leaders expressed concern too.

You state privatization "would allow FAA to devote its limited resources to overseeing safety and certification." The problem is there's no guarantee adequate funding would be provided. Currently, the FAA is almost 100% financially self-sustaining (via taxes paid mostly by airline passengers). If the FAA were to be split in two, the agency's vital aviation safety oversight and certification functions and personnel would not have a dedicated revenue stream, and thus would be vulnerable to future budget cuts, sequestration and government shutdowns.

The U.S. ATC system is the busiest and most complex in the world; it's also the safest. This is in large part due to the exceptional work of the FAA and its air-traffic controllers. There is no credible evidence that a privately operated system would be better than our current one, and there is plenty of reason to believe it would be worse.

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D., Ore.)

Rep. Rick Larsen (D., Wash.)