

Mike Crapo
United States Senator
239 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

James E. Risch
United States Senator
483 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress
2312 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Walt Minnick
Member of Congress
1517 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 15, 2009

Calvin L. Scovel III
Inspector General
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE
7th Floor
Washington, DC 20590

Anthony S. Ferrante
Director
Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service
800 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Inspector General Scovel and Director Ferrante,

Our purpose in writing is to respectfully request an audit be conducted jointly by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at the Department of Transportation and the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service (ATSOS) regarding the FAA's cost estimates for the transfer of the terminal approach control (TRACON) services currently provided at Boise TRACON to the Salt Lake City TRACON (S56).

As you may know, the Idaho delegation has been raising serious concerns with the FAA's proposed transfer of the Boise TRACON for several years. Despite the years of requests for transparency and empirical data, the agency has failed to clearly demonstrate that the radar transfer would result in improved ATC services for BOI users. In fact, the evidence that we've seen actually continues to indicate that services would be diminished and, intrinsically, safety and efficiency would also suffer.

Because these concerns have yet to be adequately addressed, we request that your offices study the costs associated with the transfer of the BOI TRACON to Salt Lake City. The study will provide us with a clear, independent review of the data and provide guidance on if, when and how the FAA should proceed with any realignment of the ATC services currently provided at Boise.

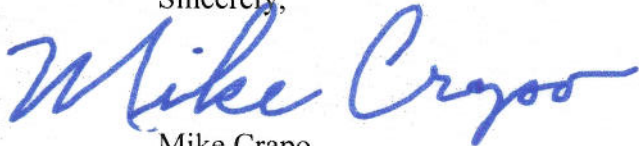
In particular, we would like your office to examine the following questions:

1. How much will it cost to modify the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS) in order to accommodate:
 - i. Multiple altimeter readings

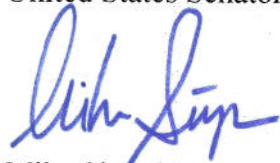
- ii. Non-contiguous airspace
 - iii. A distance exceeding the current capabilities of STARS
2. To-date, how much has the FAA spent on these STARS modifications for the BOI-S56 transfer?
 3. What are the additional costs to the FAA for maintaining the current radar configuration at BOI?
 4. In addition to the STARS modifications, how much will it cost to accommodate the BOI-S56 transfer? This should include, but not be limited to, the costs associated with:
 - i. The installation of diverse communications lines
 - ii. Hiring new air traffic controllers at S56 to accommodate the new workload
 - iii. Training for air traffic controllers at S56 on the new airspace
 - iv. Modification costs at S56 to accommodate the additional radar scopes needed to absorb the BOI airspace?
 5. What would be the increase in personnel costs facility-wide of a single-grade increase in pay at S56?

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



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United States Senator



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Member of Congress



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September 15, 2009

The Honorable J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Babbitt,

Our purpose in writing is to respectfully request that you delay transferring the terminal approach control (TRACON) from the Boise Airport until the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at the Department of Transportation and the FAA's Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service (ATSOS) have completed their joint cost-estimate study of the transfer that we have requested.

As you know, the Idaho delegation has been raising serious concerns with the FAA's proposed transfer of the Boise TRACON for several years. Despite the years of requests for transparency and empirical data, the agency has failed to clearly demonstrate that the radar transfer would result in improved ATC services for BOI users. In fact, the evidence that we've seen actually continues to indicate that services would be diminished and, intrinsically, safety and efficiency would also suffer.

We most recently conveyed these concerns with your agency on September 10th, in a meeting with Rick Day, the Senior Vice President of Operations, and Steve Osterdahl, the Vice President of Terminal Services. The agency's key arguments for the service realignment was that it would save money and improve services, but the FAA failed to clearly explain how or where the cost savings would come from or why the ARTS-IIIE system currently employed at BOI was insufficient.

It was made apparent at this meeting that the proposed transfer would be unprecedented in size and scope. Though Mr. Day was adamant that STARS is "an expandable technology" that could be modified at a cost of \$2.7 million to accommodate the transfer, he could not name another location where the STARS modifications would be needed – leading us to question the system-wide upgrade explanation. Nor could he or Mr.

Osterdahl provide an example of a TRACON transfer of even half the distance as that proposed for BOI. The FAA's undertaking in Boise is unparalleled, and we do not believe that the airspace above Idaho should be a test bed for unproven procedures and technology.

As previously stated, we have requested the DOT's Office of the Inspector General and the FAA's Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service to initiate a study of the costs associated with this radar transfer. We remain unconvinced that physically relocating the radar would be cost effective and question the assumptions that have driven the FAA's proposal. The study will give us a clear, independent review of the data and provide guidance on if, when and how the FAA should proceed with any realignment of the ATC services currently provided at Boise.

Because our concerns have not been adequately addressed, we urge you to halt the transfer of radar services to Salt Lake TRACON until the OIG and the ATSOs have completed their report and issued their findings. The current composition of the Tower and TRACON continues to provide safe air traffic services to the users of the Boise Airport. Maintaining the current configuration until it can be proven to be safe and cost effective is the right thing to do to maintain the safety and efficiency of the airspace.

Another critical reason we request that you halt the transfer is because Congress is likely to consider a FAA reauthorization bill before the end of the year, which will likely authorize the creation of the Air Traffic Control Modernization Oversight Board. This Board will be tasked with reviewing all plans to realign aviation services and facilities throughout the country and submit its recommendations in a report to the President, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. S. 1451 specifically lists TRACONs that the FAA will not be permitted to consolidate until the Board's recommendations are completed. We believe that the Boise TRACON should be treated in the same manner.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



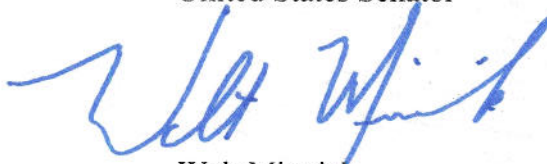
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