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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0535

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January 23, 2006

Marion C. Blakey, Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C., 20591

Re: ATO Restructure

Dear Administrator Blakey:

I am shocked by the announcement that the FAA plans to strip important support functions from the Los Angeles Regional Office. There is no operational or fiscal justification for this transfer. This ill-advised realignment will be bad for aviation customers, bad for safety, and bad for Los Angeles Regional Office employees.

The Customer

Does this proposed restructure move ATO staff closer to the customer? The answer is clearly no. The ATO's customers include airports, local governments, and businesses. The economic and aviation engine of America's West Coast is Southern California. Relocating the ATO's support and administrative functions 1500 miles away from this center is not only irrational, it is irresponsible.

Safety

Southern California is among the world's busiest airspaces and serves more passengers than any other region in the United States. LAX is the fifth busiest airport in the world. LAX is flanked by four of the other 25 busiest airports.

Southern California Terminal Radar Approach Control is the world's busiest.

Phoenix, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Oakland, and Southern California are among the fastest growing sites of air travel in the United States.

LAX is set for major modernization and safety enhancements worth billions of dollars. The FAA will have oversight, for instance, during the South Airfield Improvement Project which will begin in a matter of days.

A Los Angeles SAO is efficient. A Seattle office is not. More air travel will be needed to support and administer California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada projects and facilities from a Seattle office. More time will be spent in travel; less in the actual work needed to ensure safety.

There will be a dramatic loss of intellectual capital from the FAA which will jeopardize the administration of Southern California air traffic, airspace and engineering issues and projects. This brain drain will adversely affect the safety of the flying public.

The Western Service Area Office (SAO) headquarters of the ATO needs to be close to Southern California Facilities to receive immediate and expert care. Experience tells us that facilities located near regional headquarters receive superior programs, better funding and receive quicker service than outlying facilities. An SAO 1500 miles away will neglect the huge, critical facilities of the LAX basin. Exporting service operations out of the LAX basin is folly.

The Employees

The planned restructure equates to a reduction in force of over 100 jobs over the coming calendar year in the Los Angeles Office. Relocating the Los Angeles Office harms far more employees than moving the Seattle office would.

A move to Seattle presents employees with the Hobson's choice of either forfeiting careers or leaving friends and families.

The realignment will erode Southern California's economy due to the migration of middle class white collar jobs out of state.

Racial and ethnic diversity existing in the current Western Pacific Regional Office will be lost if Seattle becomes the Service Area Office. The Western Pacific region has the highest percentage of minority employees of any region in the country. The move will also place a disproportionately heavy burden on the backs of minorities and single parents who rely on family for child care.

The planned relocation will have a domino effect. If ATO significantly reduces its work force in the Los Angeles Office, other lines of business in the regional office will be forced to reduce their size and some will be influenced to move closer to the center of activity in Seattle, thus affecting even more employees. The pressure will exist for other lines of business to reorganize and move their staff to Seattle, further reducing jobs in Southern California.

Criteria for Decision

On virtually every criterion allegedly relied upon, the Los Angeles office of the Western-Pacific region is the superior site.

Access to Major Airports: LA is Better Site: LAX offers vastly more domestic flights than SeaTac. (LAX also offers the most number of international flights, but the study contends that this is not germane.) In 2005, LAX offered 92,000 more domestic passenger flight departures than SeaTac. LAX had 11,000,000 more domestic departing seats than SeaTac. LAX serviced 8 million more domestic enplaned passengers than SeaTac. Hence, the study's characterization that "the flight/destination options for Los Angeles may be *slightly* more robust than for Seattle" is patently dishonest.

The flight and destination options for Los Angeles are several magnitudes greater than for Seattle. In concrete terms, this is the difference between wasting an entire day at an airport terminal awaiting a single flight to Seattle, versus a short wait for the next regularly scheduled flight into LAX. The study's effort to marginalize the huge advantage that LAX holds over SeaTac betrays the workgroup's personal bias.

Commute Times: LA is Better Site: According to U.S. Census Bureau data, Hawthorne enjoys shorter commute times than Renton. As the study acknowledges, the Western-Pacific office is located in Hawthorne, California. The Northwest Mountain regional office is located in Renton, Washington. The mean travel time to work in Hawthorne is 26.9 minutes – in Renton, 27.7 minutes.

Employee Relocation Costs: LA is Better Site: Los Angeles is again the most cost-effective site. "Based on PCS costs, the most cost effective site for the restructuring of ATC Service Area Offices in the ... Western Service Area [is] Los Angeles." (Study, p. 16.) The PCS cost associated with a Seattle move is \$10,480,000. This represents a cost difference of \$1,440,000 greater than Los Angeles.

Available Office Space: LA is Better Site: The Los Angeles Regional Office can fully accommodate a transfer of operations to Los Angeles. The Hawthorne Regional Office, which is the seat of the Western Pacific Region, can be configured to accommodate another 125 people. If non-FAA contractors move out of the building, 225 more people can be accommodated in the Regional Office building.

The Seattle office has no room. It is my understanding is that the Seattle office is so congested that FAA staff are housed outside of the Regional Office in outlying office buildings.

The study states, "The workgroup conducted an *informal survey* of each potential relocation site to determine availability of office space needed for restructuring." The survey was a little too *informal*. According to the Logistics Division Manager of the Hawthorne Regional Office building, the workgroup never questioned him regarding the

availability of office space. Had he or his staff been contacted, he would have informed the workgroup about the ample room in the Hawthorne office.

The *informal survey* also overlooked the lack of available space in the Renton Regional Office Building.

Contrary to the *informal survey* results, the facts establish that Los Angeles is the most feasible site within the Western Service Area.

Quality of Life/Demographic Factors: LA is Better Site: The study explains that the workgroup chose the following Quality of Life/Demographic factors:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Cost Living Index | - Air Quality |
| - Home Cost Index | - Local Education |
| - Local Taxes | - Ability to Recruit |
| - Climate | - Educational Opportunities |
| - Crime Rate | - Transportation |
| - Local Diversity | |

Why these factors were chosen, rather than others is not made clear. The workgroup overlooked many important factors: Access to cultural life, the quality of museums, local recreational centers and natural parks, water views, city vibrancy, restaurants, sports and entertainment. On any of these factors, Los Angeles stands out, rivaled only by world cities as New York, London, and Paris.

At any rate, even on the criteria selected by the workgroup, the Los Angeles Office is far and away the superior choice.

The workgroup failed in its effort to create an aura of objectivity around its patently subjective and biased rankings. The category "ability to recruit," a hollow and meaningless phrase, exemplifies the transparent "padding" that scored Seattle highly at the expense of Los Angeles. Los Angeles received a "1" and Seattle a "5."

The "climate" criterion also underscores the flagrant score padding for Seattle. Despite Seattle's notorious rain and gloomy skies, the workgroup saw fit to bestow it with a high rating. On the first day of winter, Seattle was 50 degrees and rainy; Los Angeles was 74 degrees and sunny. We are informed that the Seattle office was forced to close recently because of icy conditions. Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Office was open for business. Climatic conditions have never been known to interfere with the operation of the Los Angeles Office.

Los Angeles' public transportation surpasses Seattle's. Los Angeles has a subway system, which Seattle lacks. Los Angeles also has an extensive and growing light rail system. In fact, the Hawthorne office building is one block from a Green Line light rail station. Furthermore, plans are approved to connect the Green Line to LAX and to extend the area's light rail system.

Los Angeles crime rates are at historic lows.

For a corrected summary of Quality of Life factors, see Table 1, below.

Table 1. Summary of Quality of Life Factors

	Seattle	Los Angeles
Cost of Living	2	2
Home Cost Index	2	2
Local Taxes	4	3
Climate	1	5
Crime Rate	4	4
Local Diversity	1	5
Air quality	1	1
Local Education	3	3
Ability to Recruit	1	5
Education Opportunities	2	5
Public Transportation	3	4
Point Total	24	40

One group that measures quality of life in America lists Seattle as one of the most stressful metropolitan areas (no. 11, far more stressful than Los Angeles, no. 32).

The point is not that Seattle is an awful place. The point is that the workgroup, which contained Seattle residents, manipulated the ratings to justify a subjective preference for Seattle.

The FAA should return to its original decision to place the Western SAO in Los Angeles/Hawthorne, minutes from LAX. In November 2004, the FAA stated that Los Angeles would serve as the Western Service Area Office. The FAA posted this decision on its public website. (Bulletin #013-4 Technical Operations Service Areas & Facilities.) This original decision sensibly placed support services where they belong, in the commercial and aviation hub of America's Pacific Rim. Indeed, the initial decision located all three SAO near the nation's busiest airports. The Eastern SAO will be located in Atlanta, home to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest. The Central SAO will be in Ft. Worth, near DFW.

The planned restructure does not appear to be in the best interest of the safety and security of our nation's aviation system. Therefore, I insist that the Agency revisit its dubious decision to deplete the Los Angeles Regional Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Waters". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

MW:cas



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

APR 10 2006

The Honorable Maxine Waters
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Waters:

Thank you for your letter of January 23 and for meeting with us on March 1 to discuss our recently announced plans to restructure the Air Traffic Organization's (ATO) administrative and staff support functions. As we explained during our meeting, employees in these positions perform financial planning, personnel management, acquisition and contracting, program and material management, technical evaluations, and other tasks that support the internal functions of the ATO.

The realignment will not affect the capacity of airports, the safety of the air traffic control system, or our ability to maintain or modernize facilities in the Los Angeles area. No one assigned to local Airport Traffic Control Tower, Terminal Radar Approach Control Facility, Air Route Traffic Control Center, or Systems Management Office will be moved as part of this effort.

The FAA currently has over 800 employees assigned to the Western-Pacific Regional Office at Hawthorne, California, including 323 that work for the ATO. We estimate that about 91 ATO positions will be reassigned to the newly designated service center in Renton, Washington. The number of people relocated will, most likely, be even fewer as some will be reassigned to or accept other ATO or FAA positions in the local area, or they may choose to retire. We are establishing a career assistance center to provide information about job vacancies for which employees wishing to stay in their local commuting area may apply.

As we assured you during our meeting, most of our ATO workforce now assigned to Hawthorne will remain in place, along with Airports, Aviation Safety and Regulation, and other organizations that support services throughout California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa.

The location study referenced in your letter was prepared by a team representing a cross-section of the ATO organization. As indicated in the report, the study team included one member from the Northwest Mountain Regional Office and three members from the Western-Pacific Regional Office. The factors the team used were those that could be measured with the most

cc: Mh
Kathleen
Edgar
Mike Rose

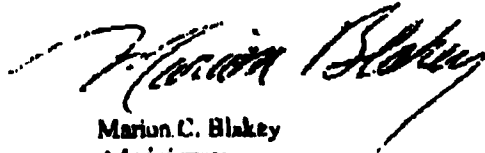
objectivity. Cost of living, home cost, taxes, climate, crime rate, education, diversity, and transportation can all be statistically validated through independent sources and are the most commonly used factors in studies of this type.

Access to cultural life, water views, and restaurants are, as you indicated, important to many people. Forbes Magazine, for example, added a culture and leisure index that included availability of museums, golf courses, theaters, and sports teams as one of the factors in its 2005 special report on the best places for business and careers. In this category, Forbes ranked Los Angeles No. 1 and Seattle No. 6 among the 150 cities in the study. But when all other factors were considered, Forbes ranked Seattle No. 73 and Los Angeles No. 106 among the best places for business and careers in the United States.

Rising operating costs continue to leave a smaller and smaller share of our limited funds available to invest in people and facilities and to modernize our aging infrastructure. Meanwhile, the demand for air traffic services is increasing at the same time that tremendous pressure is being placed on the federal budget. As a result of this restructuring, we expect to provide better, more consistent service to our customers while saving an estimated \$360 to \$460 million over the next ten years. The majority of the savings will result from the realignment into a shared services environment and reengineering our current business processes to operate more productively within those service centers.

Thank you again for meeting with us. If I can be of further help, please call me or Mr. David Balloff, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,


Marion C. Blakey
Administrator

MAXINE WATERS

MEMBER OF CONGRESS
5TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP

COMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND
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**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0535**

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PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
April 27, 2006**

**Contact: Mikael Moore
(202) 225-2201**

**CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS URGES TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY MINETA
TO KEEP FAA SUPPORT FUNCTIONS IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA**

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) sent a letter to Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, urging him to reconsider the decision of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to relocate critical FAA support functions from the Los Angeles Regional Office to Seattle. The letter also urges the Secretary to ensure that all affected FAA employees are offered comparable jobs in the Los Angeles area, if the relocation should proceed. The letter was signed by Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, and twelve Members of Congress from the Los Angeles area. The text of the letter follows:

We are concerned about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) announced plans to strip important support functions from the Los Angeles Regional Office. We question not only the wisdom of the decision, but the adverse effect it will have on affected employees.

On January 23, 2006, Congresswoman Waters sent a letter to FAA Administrator Marion Blakey outlining her concerns with the decision of the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) to relocate the Western Service Area Office (SAO) from Los Angeles to Seattle (enclosed). As you will recall, Congresswoman Waters met with you on March 1, 2006, to explore the issues raised as a result of that decision.

As a result of relocating the ATO's administrative functions 1500 miles to the north, there will be a dramatic loss of intellectual capital from the FAA that will jeopardize the administration of Southern California air traffic, airspace, and engineering issues and projects. This brain drain will adversely affect the safety of the flying public.

- more -

The ATO Western SAO needs to remain close to Southern California facilities. Experience teaches us that facilities located near regional headquarters receive far better programs, funding, and service than do outlying facilities. A remote SAO will neglect the huge facilities of the LAX basin.

The planned restructure equates to a reduction in force of over 100 jobs over the coming calendar year in the Los Angeles Office. A move to Seattle presents many employees with the Hobson's choice of either forfeiting careers or abandoning friends and families. The restructure will also place a disproportionately heavy burden on the backs of minorities and single parents who rely on family for child care.

We call on the Department to reconsider its decision. Should the restructure nevertheless proceed, it will adversely affect many lives. Therefore, it is very important that all affected employees be offered comparable jobs in the Los Angeles area. We appreciate your attention to our concerns, and we expect that the FAA and the Department will keep us apprised of all phases of the ongoing reorganization of the ATO, especially in regard to the impact on Los Angeles area affected employees.

Sincerely,

Maxine Waters
Jane Harman
Juanita Millender-McDonald
Howard Berman
Xavier Becerra
Hilda L. Solis
Adam Schiff

Diann Feinstein
Barbara Boxer
Henry Waxman
Linda Sánchez
Grace Napolitano
Joc Baca
Diane Watson

###

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2006

The Hon. Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation
Department of Transportation
401 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

Re: ATO Restructure

Dear Secretary Mineta:

We are concerned about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) announced plans to strip important support functions from the Los Angeles Regional Office. We question not only the wisdom of the decision, but the adverse effect it will have on affected employees.

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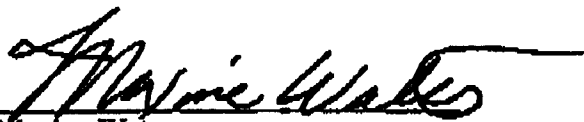
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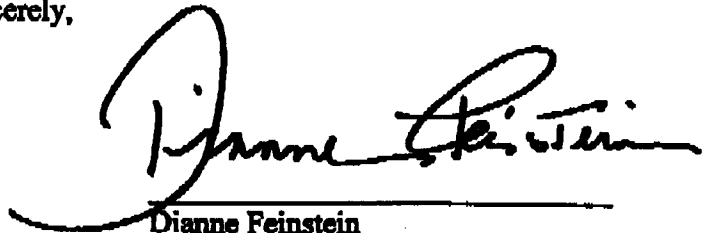
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Sincerely,



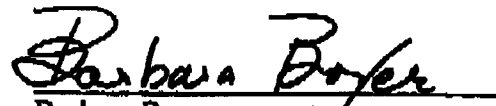
Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jane Harman
Member of Congress



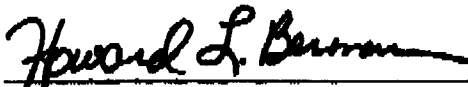
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Juanita Millender-McDonald
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman
Member of Congress



Howard Berman
Member of Congress




Linda Sánchez
Member of Congress




Xavier Becerra
Member of Congress



Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress




Hilda L. Solis
Member of Congress



Joe Baca
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Diane Watson
Member of Congress

Enclosure

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U.S. Representative Maxine Waters Sends Letter to FAA Calling for Halt to Plan That Would Close Los Angeles Air Traffic Office

Twenty-Three Members Join Effort to Protect Jobs and Safety of Air Travelers

July 21, 2006

Washington, DC - United States Representative Maxine Waters (CA-35) yesterday issued the following letter to Marion Blakey, Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) calling for a halt to plans that would consolidate regional offices of the Air Traffic Organization in Anchorage, AK, Boston, MA, Chicago, IL, Kansas City, MO, New York, NY, and Los Angeles, CA. Twenty-three Members of Congress from the House and Senate signed the letter, the text of which is below:

**Marion C. Blakey, Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C., 20591**

Re: ATO Reorganization of Service Area Offices

Dear Administrator Blakey:

We are writing to urge you to suspend the reduction in force planned for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Air Traffic Organization (ATO) regional offices.

It is imperative that the nation's air traffic move as safely and efficiently as possible, and we are willing to work with you to ensure that the FAA has the resources it needs for effective air traffic operations. We are greatly concerned, however, by the FAA's restructuring plan because it will

reduce the number of personnel with technical expertise in air traffic operations at the FAA's regional offices in Anchorage, Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, New York and Los Angeles.

We have recently obtained an August, 2005 Booz-Allen report, “ATO Structure and Process Evaluation--Final Report,” which analyzes the restructuring plan’s strategies and goals, and includes recommendations for its design and implementation. In our view, the report does not prove that the reduction in force will result in superior air service at less cost, which is the primary justification for the ATO restructuring initiative. Nor is it clear whether the FAA is adopting the report’s recommendations.

This issue demands a full and complete review before reductions in force should be considered. Therefore, in the interest of ensuring appropriate Congressional oversight, we request that you suspend the planned reduction in force at the ATO offices and brief our offices regarding the FAA’s implementation of the Booz-Allen recommendations and the current state of the consolidation.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rep. Maxine Waters; Sen. Richard Durbin; Rep. Jan Schakowsky; Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; Rep. Barney Frank; Sen. John F. Kerry; Rep. Jane Harman; Sen. Dianne Feinstein; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver; Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Gregory W. Meeks; Sen. Barack Obama; Rep. John F. Tierney; Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald; Rep. Alcee Hastings; Rep. Stephen Lynch; Rep. Diane Watson; Rep. Joe Baca; Rep. James P. McGovern; Rep. William Delahunt; Rep. Brad Sherman; Rep. Linda Sánchez; Rep. Dennis Moore; Rep. Xavier Becerra

cc: The Honorable Maria Cino, Acting Secretary of Transportation

###

Contact: Edward Jackson
202-225-2201

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