

**Hearing Statement
Subcommittee on Appropriations
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development**

Oversight of the Federal Aviation Administration

Chairman Susan M. Collins

July 31, 2019

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Today our Subcommittee is holding an oversight hearing on the Federal Aviation Administration. I'm very pleased to be joined by Senator Jack Reed, the Subcommittee's ranking member, Senator Capito is here right from the start, and I'm sure we will be joined by others.

The FAA is a \$17 billion agency with 44,000 employees, who are responsible for virtually every aspect of aviation in our country including, the safety of commercial airlines, general aviation, and cargo aircraft. Every day, FAA's air traffic controllers are responsible for more than 44,000 flights and 2.7 million airline passengers across more than 29 million square miles of airspace.

Over the last year, much needed attention has been focused on the crashes of Lyon Air flight 610 and Ethiopian Air flight 302. Serious questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the FAA's regulatory framework. For the sake of the 346 victims and their families, we need to ensure that these accidents are thoroughly investigated, their causes identified, and their solutions implemented.

Unfortunately at this point, we do not yet have the conclusive results of the two crash investigations and cannot say definitively why these terrible accidents occurred. For these types of catastrophic events however, there is rarely just one cause. There is almost always a cascade of errors or failures that lead to an airplane crash.

Nevertheless, since the second crash in March, we continue to hear of more problems with FAA certification of the 737 MAX aircraft. A *New York Times* article over the weekend, shed additional light on some of the problems with FAA's Organizational Designation Authorization, or ODA program. In particular, the press story details instances in which FAA managers appeared to be more concerned with Boeing's production timeline, rather than the safety recommendations of its own engineers.

These stories are particularly damaging for the leadership of FAA's safety oversight. The ongoing investigations by the Inspector General and the National Transportation Safety Board are looking at all aspects of the Max aircraft, including the certification of the MCAS, the instillation of the angle of attack sensors, the pilot training, the level of automation in the aircraft, and the human factors related to the design of the cockpit.

While the Max aircraft accidents deserve much of our attention this year, it is critical that the FAA continues to make progress in improving air travel in our nation's congested airspace.

Our nation's airspace continues to become more complex, with new players in the aviation industry, such as commercial space operators and unmanned aircraft systems, or drones. During the last two years, this Subcommittee has provided substantial funding to improve safety, increase the efficiency of air travel, and modernize the infrastructure at our nation's airports; and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how these investments have improved air travel for the public.

The next gen programs like performance-based navigation, and time-based flow management, will improve air travel by reducing flight times. Planes are burning less fuel, emitting fewer emissions and creating less noise through other next gen improvements.

By January first of next year, all commercial aircraft and most general aviation will be equipped with Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast, or ADSB, allowing us to transition away from ground-based radar to more precise GPS tracking. With ADSB, pilots can see other aircraft in the sky, pinpoint hazardous weather and terrain, and receive important flight information. ADSB will also improve the efficiency of our skies by allowing planes to fly safely with reduced separation and also enhance safety on the tarmac by reducing the risk of runway incursions.

Turning to our nation's airports, I would point to the \$1.5 billion in additional funding that this Subcommittee has provided for our nation's airports over the last two years. This funding has been particularly beneficial for small rural airports, such as the one in Rangeley, Maine, which was awarded an \$11 million grant for a runway extension project. With a longer runway, Lifeflight of Maine, an air ambulance system, will be able to bring its twin turbo prop aircraft to provide air medical services for communities in an area that has access to few medical providers.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on all of these key issues this morning, but particularly the issues of safety.

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