

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2013

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

It is our understanding that FAA employees were notified Tuesday of an intended "Save Money" furlough for up to eleven (11) work days, beginning on or about April 7. We are disappointed that this is the route that the FAA and the Administration has chosen to take, rather than sharpening their pencils and finding cost savings in other areas.

On February 25, 2013, we formally requested information regarding FAA's plan for sequestration. That letter went unanswered similar to previous requests. In hearings of both the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on February 27, and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Tuesday of this week, we heard a lot of rhetoric on the sequester, but no real answers. The Budget Control Act detailing this particular budget sequestration was signed into law by President Obama on August 2, 2011. Your agencies should have been planning for the possibility of a budget sequestration once the super committee process failed at the end of 2011. However, little to no planning seems to have taken place since that time. Since August of 2012, Congress has been asking for detailed budget sequestration plans from DOT and FAA. However, those requests have only resulted in limited and incomplete information about how sequester will impact the FAA and other federal agencies and departments, which is unacceptable.

A review of FAA spending over the past several years has exposed several areas ripe for belt-tightening at the FAA. These areas include, but are not limited to: a yearly travel budget for FAA employees of \$179 million; a fleet of 46 aircraft that costs \$143 million a year to maintain; a 41 percent, or \$3 billion budget increase since 2002, even though domestic flights are down 27 percent from 2000 traffic levels; and clear mismanagement and waste on Air Traffic Control modernization contracts.

Because DOT and FAA have continuously rebuffed our efforts to gain detailed information about your plans for sequester, we are left with more questions than answers. We know that FAA spends millions of taxpayer dollars to send employees to conferences. Has all conference spending been eliminated under the sequester? We know that FAA plans to shut down a significant number of contract towers, even though the contract tower program has continuously proven to be cost effective. How was this choice made? Were all other service contracts

examined for waste and cost overruns before choosing to make cuts to an economically sound program?

The flying public paid over \$12 billion in excise taxes and user fees in 2012, yet these are the people the FAA has chosen to inconvenience because of its lack of planning and inability to produce credible and specific data on budget cuts and constraints. Since our previous requests for information have gone unanswered, we cannot assume, nor do we believe, that all savings options were explored before the choice was made to furlough employees, close towers, and inconvenience the flying public you are supposed to serve.

While we continue to await your answers to our questions, the FAA has the authority and the flexibility in its budget to use the savings found in these and other areas to pay for air traffic controllers and other personnel and to avoid resorting to furloughs. In fact, the FAA has \$2.7 billion in non-personnel Operations costs that should have been examined for savings before furloughs were considered. Thoroughly examining real areas of potential savings, and not resorting to scare tactics and the punishment of employees and the public for political purposes, is the only way to productively move forward and ensure that the FAA upholds its stated commitment to the flying public.

Sincerely,



Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure



John Thune
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation