

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

GROUND-BASED AIR TRAFFIC
MANAGEMENT

HON. SHARICE DAVIDS

OF KANSAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, December 9, 2021

Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to engage with my colleague, Representative RICK LARSEN, the Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation.

I thank Representative LARSEN for his hard work to ensure that aviation priorities were included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. I am concerned about the many ground-based air traffic management systems that are now operating well beyond their planned service life. This includes the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) network of more than 2,700 navigation and landing systems located at more than 1,500 sites in all 50 states. For the last 20 years, the FAA has been systematically dedicated to the implementation of NextGen to enable more efficient flight operations in the National Airspace System. During this period, investment has shifted away from legacy ground-based air traffic control infrastructure. It is important for us all to recognize that aging electronic systems cannot be sustained indefinitely. I am concerned that accelerating rates of component failures combined with parts obsolescence creates a risk of field failures that would threaten aviation safety and the flying public.

I am pleased that Division J, Title VIII of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides \$5 billion over 5 years for the FAA's Facilities and Equipment account. Included in this amount is funding to address investment and modernization shortfalls in ground-based aviation infrastructure, including landing and navigational aids. These systems are critical to maintaining safety in the national airspace and providing operational resiliency.

Representative LARSEN, I am glad that the bill reflects our shared priorities of providing more funding to the FAA's Facilities and Equipment budget and I want to be certain that a proportionate amount is spent on modernization of crucial infrastructure, such as lighting and landing systems. Is it your understanding that this is consistent with the intent of the committee? Can we continue to work to ensure that the U.S. Department of Transportation's 2022 spend plan reflects these congressional priorities?

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Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Madam Speaker, I share the concerns of my friend from

Kansas regarding the need to upgrade the Nation's ground-based aviation infrastructure in a much timelier fashion. Aviation is a part of the backbone of the U.S. economy and keeping all aspects of the system up to date is essential to continued growth and quality of life for all Americans. The backlog of ground-based navigation aids that are currently operating past their useful life is real. In fact, at the current slow pace of modernization, some of these systems will be more than 100 years old by the time they are replaced.

As Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, I am committed to addressing this issue before it becomes a crisis for the aviation system. The funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will give the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) the tools it needs to make significant improvements in the safety and reliability of critical ground-based infrastructure by acquiring, installing, and commissioning new instrument landing systems; distance measuring equipment; tactical air navigation equipment; runway lighting systems; and very high frequency omni-range equipment. Further, this funding supports the FAA's administrative expenses, including salaries, giving the agency the flexibility to bolster its workforce and implement innovative solutions to accelerate the modernization of these systems.

Ensuring the safety and reliability of the Nation's ground-based aviation infrastructure is a priority of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and I am committed to working with Representative DAVIDS on this issue as we move forward, including oversight on the U.S. Department of Transportation spend plan.