

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Nita Lowey (NY-18), Congressman Albio Sires (NJ-13), Congressman Steve Israel (NY-2), and Congressman Bill Pascrell (NJ-8) today sent a letter to Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters to voice opposition to “congestion pricing” and other untested plans to alleviate flight delays in the New York Metropolitan area by increasing ticket prices or restricting access to flights.

A copy of the letter follows:

Dear Secretary Peters:

We write to you with great concern about efforts by the Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration that would restrict access to the airports in the New York/New Jersey airspace or increase prices on flights to these airports.

As we are all aware, commercial air travel in and around the New York Metro Area was disrupted by devastating delays over the summer. We all agree that the status quo is unacceptable; however your recent proposal puts the economic prosperity of the region, the airports, and more than 38,000 residents of our districts employed by the airlines at these airports at risk.

Your proposal shows a lack of appreciation for the desire of both business and leisure travelers to fly into all three of the Port Authority controlled commercial airports, Kennedy, LaGuardia, and Newark Liberty. Passengers in both categories will always demand flights into the area. Therefore, it serves no purpose to restrict access or artificially drive up prices. Additionally, because commercial aviation is not the sole cause of the congested airspace in the region, we are dismayed that you have made no similar attempts to regulate or engage the general and business aviation community.

We do not believe the most crowded air space in the country is the appropriate venue to experiment with previously untested methods for regulating air travel, such as congestion pricing. There is no evidence that a reduction in flights will result from this model. Ultimately, we fear the result of congestion pricing will not be a reduction in flights, but a reduction in the number of families able to afford flights. As New York City remains the financial capital of the world, business travelers will always be willing to pay top-dollar for flights during peak travel hours, and the families living in our communities could suffer most from increased ticket prices.

Additionally, recognizing the significant international air travel originating and terminating at Newark Liberty Airport and Kennedy Airport, it makes little sense to apply your proposed pricing model to only domestic carriers. At Kennedy Airport alone, 60 foreign-flag carriers accounted for 54 percent of all international departures in July. International carriers will certainly take advantage of a void in the market caused by domestic carriers being priced out of operating international flights. Furthermore, your plan fails to account for the international traveler not originating in the New York/New Jersey Metro area who requires a connecting flight through Kennedy Airport. Therefore, any proposals to reduce flights occurring at these airports, as

ill-conceived as they may be, must apply across the board and fall in line with the International Air Transport Association's (IATA's) World Scheduling Guidelines (WSG).

We strongly urge you to return to the drawing board, recognizing the vital role commercial aviation has on the economic prosperity of the region.

Instead of looking at untested proposals, an immediate step to fix airspace congestion would be the appointment of an "airspace czar" to evaluate congestion at every step of the flight process – from tower control, to the TRACON, to the routing center. This model was used successfully to solve South Florida's airspace challenges in 2005, yet no similar steps have been taken to address the situation for New York and New Jersey in the short or long term.

In addition to the appointment of an individual to oversee the airspace, there are also technology upgrades that could improve the management of aircraft in flight. Developing and implementing Area Navigation (RNAV) technologies would allow for precise management of the distances between aircraft and could for the first time allow Kennedy to operate all four of its runways simultaneously.

Before dramatically reducing flights or driving up prices for local families, we urge you to exhaust all technological and staffing alternatives.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to solve the air congestion problem in the region, while ensuring that New York and New Jersey remain affordable and viable air destinations.

Sincerely,

Nita M. Lowey

Albio Sires  
Steve Israel

Bill Pascrell Jr.  
Gregory Meeks

Donald M. Payne  
John "Randy" Kuhl

Steven R. Rothman  
Charles E. Schumer

Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Michael McNulty

Frank Pallone Jr.  
Vito Fossella

Rush Holt  
Jerrold Nadler

Mike Ferguson  
Eliot Engel

Frank LoBiondo  
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Peter King

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