



National Air Carrier Association
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August 4, 2022

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the National Air Carrier Association (NACA)¹, including the nation's six ultra low-cost carriers (ULCCs), Allegiant Air, Avelo Air, Breeze Airways, Frontier Airlines, Spirit Airlines, and Sun Country Airlines, I am writing in response to your recent public comments in which you acknowledged the scarcity of commercial pilots that our passenger and cargo carriers are facing. As evidenced this summer, the current and projected scarcity of pilots, mechanics, and other airline staff continue to present serious challenges for the airlines and our passengers.

We greatly appreciate that you recognize the severity of the problem and respectfully ask that you and your impressive team at the U.S. Department of Transportation take a leadership role in the development of policies to help increase the pipeline of U.S. pilots. Over the past several months, we have briefed Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs Annie Petsonk and her team, as well as leaders of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, on the severity of the pilot supply problem and how it is already adversely impacting service to less profitable small and rural communities like South Bend, Indiana.² Without swift bipartisan policy action by the Biden Administration and Congress, the problem will only worsen over the next decade. This year alone, the industry collectively needs to hire at least 7,500 pilots, yet the current number of new pilots produced is less than 5,000. In the next five years, the industry will lose 12,000 active pilots due to the current regulatory mandate that pilots retire at age 65. By 2030, the total shortfall of pilots will total over 28,000, resulting in \$49 billion in lost revenue, nearly 1,800 grounded aircraft, and 174,000 lost U.S. airline jobs. With demand for leisure travel exceeding pre-pandemic levels, service reductions combined with high fuel and labor costs will inevitably lead to higher fares, which will disproportionately hurt ULCCs since their passengers are primarily working families making less than \$100,000 annually.

With Congress planning to consider the next FAA reauthorization bill next year, we need to begin working collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the major pilot unions and the Families of Continental Flight 3407, on possible solutions that will increase the pilot supply and

¹ NACA member airlines include Air Transport International, Allegiant Air, AmeriJet, Atlas Air, Avelo Air, Breeze Airways, Everts Air Cargo, Frontier Airlines, GlobalX, iAero Airways, Kalitta Air, Lynden Air Cargo, Miami Air International, National Airlines, Northern Air Cargo, Omni Air International, Spirit Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, USA Jet Airlines, Western Global Airlines, and World Atlantic Airlines.

² NACA's research on pilot supply challenges can be found at <https://www.wefly4you.com>.



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further enhance aviation safety. We reached out to each of these groups several weeks ago, but they have yet to respond in any meaningful manner. We are disheartened by this issue being relegated to press releases, ad campaigns and back-and-forth accusations. The solutions the flying public demands, and deserves, will only be achieved by active participation of all these stakeholders in the examination of real data, dialogue, and collaboration.

We believe you and your team are uniquely situated to exercise leadership on this issue and bring all stakeholders to the table to begin a clinical assessment of the facts and determine how best to ensure that our nation has a robust supply of highly-trained pilots to meet present and future air travel demand. We respectfully request that DOT convene such a meeting by the end of the year, so that we can enter 2023 with some momentum, and hope, toward keeping the U.S. commercial aviation system the safest and most accessible air transport system in the world. Inaction, on all our parts, can no longer remain an option.

NACA will gladly assist in the planning and execution of such a meeting, at your request. We are prepared to help in any way we can. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George Novak", with a stylized flourish at the end.

George Novak
President and CEO
National Air Carrier Association

cc: Annie Petsonk, Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs
Billy Nolen, Acting Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration