

CONTROLLERS TO HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE: WE ARE COMMITTED  
TO BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION TO IMPROVING AIR  
TRAVEL SYSTEM

*WASHINGTON - The National Air Traffic Controllers Association is committed to helping address the challenges facing the country's air travel system and today is pleased to report significant progress on its key issues before the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee.*

NATCA President John Carr, who in March before the Subcommittee outlined the proactive steps controllers would take regarding the delay situation, will testify that controllers are working with the Federal Aviation Administration, pilots, airlines, airports and other interested groups to develop and implement concrete solutions to the capacity dilemma. Some highlights:

NATCA is renewing its commitment to ensure that any changes undertaken to the air traffic control system keep safety as the bottom line. We are working day and night with the FAA to move new technologies into the workplace as quickly, efficiently and safely as possible, Carr said. NATCA currently has representatives on 65 technical projects. We are directly involved in every technology project from its inception. Carr added that NATCA is working closely with the FAA to maximize efficiencies gained from the addition of choke point sectors into the National Airspace System. NATCA is also participating in all products of the Free Flight Phase One teams and has opened up constructive lines of communication with the Air Line Pilots Association, airlines and airport operators. NATCA remains a partner in National Airspace Redesign, with one full-time airspace liaison, 11 regional representatives and about 350 controllers nationwide who are involved in the project. On March 16, NATCA and the FAA signed a memorandum of understanding which states that changes to the National Airspace System should be based on increasing safety, efficiency and capacity and any modifications are to be made in the best interest of the users of the system and the flying public. NATCA has begun to look into safe and reasonable changes to the requirements for separating aircraft. Last month, Carr met with Professor John Hansman from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who is evaluating current separation standards. His data shows that while separation standards have remained unchanged, radar performance has improved five-fold. NATCA is willing to join with the National Transportation Safety Board, NASA, pilots, FAA and other interested parties to carefully examine the possibility of reducing the separation standards while keeping safety margins intact, Carr said. Carr is working to obtain the labor seat on the Management Advisory Council. The MAC provides advice and counsel to the FAA administrator and functions as an oversight resource for management, policy, spending and regulatory matters.