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December 5, 2024

Administrator Michael Whitaker
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Whitaker:

I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the continued use of the Instrument Landing System Yankee (ILS-Y) approach procedure at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW), as highlighted in recent reports and findings by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC). These findings indicate ongoing safety risks to landing aircrafts and the flying public, which have been raised by whistleblowers and investigators over the past decade.

The ILS-Y approach enables simultaneous landings on three parallel runways by utilizing two offset Instrument Landing System (ILS) localizers, which provide course alignment for aircrafts without visual contact. At DTW, these offset localizers are said to be strategically placed to mitigate signal interference caused by taxiing aircrafts in ILS critical areas.

However, as you know, the ILS-Y approach was previously discontinued in 2015 following safety concerns, yet it is now being utilized again to accommodate increased air traffic. According to the OSC, the placement of the offset localizer antenna at DTW results in signal interference, particularly during inclement weather or when aircrafts taxi through the critical area. Moreover, the two mitigations previously deemed essential by the FAA — restrictions for high-tail aircrafts and weather-related restrictions — claim to either be insufficient or no longer in effect, despite documented risks posed by smaller aircrafts taxiing through this area.

Given the FAA's responsibility to prioritize safety, I ask that you please respond to the following questions by Monday, December 23, 2024:

- What is the FAA's rationale for resuming the use of the ILS-Y approach at DTW despite safety concerns and the discontinuation of weather-related mitigations previously deemed critical?

- What steps is the FAA taking to address the interference issues caused by the offset localizer antenna's placement, especially during inclement weather or when smaller aircrafts taxi through the critical area?
- What alternative configurations or systems, such as relocating the offset localizer, are being evaluated to ensure the safety of aircrafts and the public?
- How does the FAA justify the current approach given the OSC's conclusion that the agency's findings on the matter do not appear reasonable?

The safety of pilots, passengers, and airport personnel should remain the FAA's highest priority. The continued reports of safety risks and inconsistent mitigations raise significant concerns about the FAA's approach to resolving these issues. I urge the FAA to conduct a comprehensive review of this procedure and provide a detailed update on the steps being taken to ensure safety at DTW.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress