

Rep. Rothman to FAA Head: Safety is My Top Priority at Teterboro Airport

For Immediate Release

Contact: Brice Peyre

Phone: 201-646-0808

REP. ROTHMAN TO FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION HEAD: "SAFETY IS MY TOP PRIORITY AT TETERBORO AIRPORT"

(Washington, D.C.) Congressman Steve Rothman, a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, this week grilled Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Marion Blakey on safety issues at Teterboro Airport at a House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee hearing on the FAA's fiscal year 2006 budget.

Congressman Rothman recounted Teterboro Airport's most recent accident of February 2005 to Administrator Blakey and his Subcommittee colleagues. He told of how the 25,000 pound Challenger 600 jet failed to take off and instead skidded off the runway, through an airport security fence, across busy Route 46 during morning rush hour, finally crashed into two cars, and smashed through a brick warehouse, where the jet burst into flames. He also highlighted the fact that, over the past 10 years, there have been nine accidents and two incidents at the airport, resulting in five fatalities.

"Administrator Blakey, these incidents make it clear to me how dangerous airport operations at Teterboro have become. What was once a place for general aviation propeller planes has now become a facility utilized by larger, faster, and potentially more dangerous jets," said Congressman Rothman. "Those of us who live, work, and go to school near Teterboro Airport are very fortunate that this Subcommittee has continued to uphold a ban on planes weighing over 100,000 pounds from operating in and out of Teterboro. We have seen first-hand the destruction that can be caused by a 25,000 pound aircraft. Could you even imagine what would have happened had that been a 175,000 pound aircraft loaded with fuel? My constituents and I are grateful to this Subcommittee for its continued support and I look forward to working with both my colleagues and you, Ms. Blakey, to ensure that Teterboro and all general aviation airports are safe and fully staffed."

Congressman Rothman then questioned Administrator Blakey concerning a shortage of control tower system specialist technicians. Teterboro Airport currently operates 16 hours a day, 7 days a week and has four control tower system specialist technicians on site. Eight technicians are required by FAA standards.

"If there is a problem during an open watch with no technician on site, a technician has to be brought in from another location, which can sometimes take hours, resulting in longer delays," said Congressman Rothman. "Not only is this inefficient, but it is also unsafe."

Administrator Blakey said she was unaware of the shortage and would evaluate whether newer technology at the airport has justified the reduction in technicians.

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