Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Bedford:

We write to express our alarm over recent safety incidents at the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Potomac TRACON facility impacting aviation traffic at airports in the National Capital Region. Air travel in this region is facilitated by three of the busiest large airports in the United States. The delays and groundings are troubling enough, but the reports that the incidents at Potomac TRACON were caused by equipment failure raise serious concerns. These incidents, along with the tragic accident of January 29, 2025, involving American Airlines Flight 5342 and a U.S. Army helicopter, demand that Congress have a full accounting of the management, operations, maintenance and planned and completed improvements for the Potomac TRACON facility specifically, and the airspace management of the National Capital Region generally.

Potomac TRACON is the 4th largest TRACON facility in the country and manages flights for DCA, Dulles, BWI, as well as Richmond and Charlottesville. The facility also supports aviation operations for multiple military bases and a number of general aviation airports in Virginia and Maryland. On March 13th and March 27th, equipment at Potomac TRACON failed, resulting in hospitalized personnel, groundings, and delays. This incident raises questions about preparedness and operational reliability and is not an acceptable state of affairs. We need to better understand the causes of, and the FAA's response to, the incidents, especially given the additional billions of taxpayer dollars entrusted to FAA for facility modernization in the past several years.

Congress passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, which, among other provisions, directed the FAA to modernize ground-based infrastructure. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act provided $12.5 billion toward ATC modernization. These funds were authorized for technology upgrades, new ATC facilities, and other resources. In order to better understand the investments and improvements that FAA intends to make at Potomac TRACON and the steps that the FAA is taking to mitigate the specific causes of the two incidents in March, we request your response to the following no later than April 28, 2026:

1. Beyond what is available through public reporting, please provide details on the specific causes of the incidents that led to evacuation and ground stops at Potomac TRACON on March 13th and 27th.

2. In advance of the incidents on March 13th and 27th, were senior leadership of the facility or at the FAA aware of the risk that the state of devices, equipment, or infrastructure could create operational issues for the facility?

3. Have the incidents on March 13th and 27th led FAA to develop a contingency plan for similar events following those incidents, or a plan for redundancy to enable continued airspace operations?

4. Please provide details on current policies and procedures that are in place to track the lifecycle of critical equipment, devices, and infrastructure and to maintain critical equipment, devices, and infrastructure within Potomac TRACON.

5. Provide the amount of Federal funds that have been expended, as of the date of this letter, for the specific purposes of repairing, modernizing, or otherwise addressing maintenance needs or improvements at Potomac TRACON since each of the following dates:
    a. November 15, 2021;
    b. May 16, 2024; and
    c. July 4, 2025.

6. Provide information on the specific repairs, modernizations, maintenance, and/or other improvements carried out by, or at the behest of, FAA at Potomac TRACON over the last three years.

7. Are there existing repairs, modernizations, maintenance, or improvements that FAA plans to, as of the date of this letter, carry out at Potomac TRACON?
    a. If yes, provide:
        i. Information on each of those items sufficient to understand the effect that the addressed need will have on operations at Potomac TRACON; and
        ii. The timeline for bidding, review, performance, and completion of each of those items.

8. Have the incidents of March 13th and March 27th led to a FAA review of other TRACONs or ground facilities owned or operated by FAA or under the authority of FAA?
    a. If yes, provide information on the review, including the objective of the review, list of covered facilities, official(s) responsible for leading the review, and any other information necessary to demonstrate the purpose, scope, cost, and metrics by which the review will be evaluated for achieving its purpose.

We urge the FAA to prioritize the safety of the FAA personnel working at Potomac TRACON. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress

Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress

James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress