

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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Congress of the United States
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August 31, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Dept of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Steve Dickson
Office of the Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

RE: Urgent Need for New Air Traffic Control Tower at Tampa International Airport

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am very concerned with the deteriorating condition of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) air traffic control tower at Tampa International Airport (TPA) and respectfully request your assistance in expediting replacement for the fifty-year-old tower, particularly now that the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed the U.S. Senate and is poised to be approved by the House of Representatives. As you know, the bipartisan infrastructure package invests **\$25 billion in airports** to address repair and maintenance backlogs, reduce congestion and emissions, and drive electrification and other low-carbon technologies. Of that, \$5 billion would be available for FAA facilities with an allocation of about \$1 billion per year from fiscal 2022 through 2026 for air traffic control and tower equipment. Importantly, the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA), the trade association representing commercial service airports in the United States, also strongly supports the bipartisan infrastructure package for American airports and air traffic control towers.

The Tampa Airport air traffic control tower and dedicated controllers have served us well for almost fifty years, but the tower is at the end of its useful life and is in need of replacement as soon as possible. In fact, the tower has been seriously deficient for a number of years. I toured the tower personally several years ago and was shocked at the state of the tower. I relayed my concerns to FAA at that time, and spoke with FAA officials in July, 2015, and rather than proceed with replacement, the FAA chose to make repairs. Since that time, the conditions in the tower have deteriorated. There are multiple documented hazards including:

- Water intrusion issues resulting from old and broken pipes, some near electrical wiring.
- Black and brown water in toilets and sinks.
- Sewage and wastewater odors so pungent they have resulted in controllers taking sick leave.
- Unreliable and dirty HVAC system; often not adequately controlling the climate in Florida's hot and humid weather.

- Outdated and inadequate safety procedures; including a lack of required emergency exit routes.
- Unreliable elevator transportation to the tower.
- Cracked windows and rust on the surrounding support beams.

Rather than spend any additional funds on repairs, the most efficient use of tax dollars is to proceed with a full replacement of the tower as soon as possible. While the average age of FAA towers is 30 years, the TPA tower is 50 years. The multiple safety and quality of life hazards are a danger to the air traffic controllers and should be addressed before the flying public is put at risk. The air traffic controllers at TPA are critical to the safety and efficiency of this important Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) facility and the hundreds of flights that traverse the Florida and Gulf of Mexico airspace every day. The FAA must ensure that they are able to do their job without unsafe working conditions.

At a time when the Congress and President Joe Biden are poised to make major investments in critical American infrastructure, the Tampa Airport air traffic control tower must be a top priority. Please advise how we expedite the replacement of the FAA tower in collaboration with Tampa International Airport as soon as possible. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or Jake Barr at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 14

CC: Shalanda Young, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jane Castor, Mayor, City of Tampa
Stacy White, Commissioner, Hillsborough County
Joe Lopano, Chief Executive Officer, Tampa International Airport
Gary W. Harrod, Chairman, Hillsborough County Aviation Authority (HCAA) Board of Directors
Robert I. Watkins, Vice Chairman, HCAA Board of Directors
Brig. General Chip Diehl, Treasurer, HCAA Board of Directors