

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

March 13, 2013

Mr. Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta,

I am writing to express deep concern about the proposed closure of Saint Cloud Regional Airport's air traffic control tower, and to respectfully request that you reconsider that proposal.

As you know, the FAA is being forced to consider the closure of air traffic control towers as a result of sequestration—the extreme cuts that were originally designed to compel Congress to find an alternative way to reducing the deficit. I remain committed to finding such an alternative. The closure of air traffic control towers are a good example of why it is so important that we find that alternative. I'm very concerned about the effect the cuts will have on air safety. Nowhere is that more true than at Saint Cloud Regional Airport.

The air traffic control tower at Saint Cloud Regional Airport is vital to guide the movement of a diverse set of aircraft. This airport serves commercial jets, corporate jets, personal aircraft, emergency service aircraft, and military helicopters flying with the National Guard. I am concerned about what the sudden lack of coordination among these varied aircraft caused by the closure of the air traffic control tower may mean for air safety, and the safety of the surrounding community. The airport also currently serves as an alternate airport for aircraft using Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport, which allows diverted flights to safely land in Saint Cloud. This would no longer be the case if the tower is closed, and aircraft would be diverted to an airport much farther away.

I sympathize with the difficult budget decisions that you have to make as a result of sequestration. It is my hope that Congress can pass a more balanced approach to replace these extreme and damaging cuts as soon as possible. But until that happens, I urge you to reconsider closing the air traffic control tower at Saint Cloud Regional Airport.

Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator