

April 28, 2023

Mr. Ben Minicucci
Chief Executive Officer
Alaska Airlines
19300 International Boulevard
Seattle, WA 98188

Dear Mr. Minicucci:

I write out of concern about the rapid increase in complaints from customers concerning air travel. Over the last several months, American aviation has been plagued by close calls on runways, cancellations, and long delays. Worsening trends in the frequency of these situations are especially troubling considering the billions of dollars the passenger airline industry was given at the expense of taxpayers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to recently released U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) air travel consumer report data, the department received 77,656 complaints in 2022.¹ These numbers represent a dramatic rise in customer complaints compared to pre-pandemic levels, even though the number of flyers has not exceeded such.

One of the core issues contributing to rising customer complaints is the increasing frequency of flight cancellations and long delays. There is absolutely no question that *some* cancellations and delays are assuredly a result of America's persistent labor challenges, and I, as well as my colleagues, look forward to addressing this issue during the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) reauthorization. With that, there are serious concerns arising from these delays and cancellations that question the internal operations of your company – specifically, questions surrounding whether your airline is appropriately adjusting its flight schedules to ensure that U.S. customers are not stranded in airports or having their flights delayed.

In addition to declining service, the rising number of near collisions and close calls on, or near, runways is also of great concern. Many of these incidents are currently under investigation and the FAA recently announced the establishment of an Independent Aviation Safety Review Team.² I look forward to seeing the results of these investigations, as well as recommendations produced by the Independent Aviation Safety Review Team. Safety is of the utmost importance for any and all types of travel, particularly when operating machinery moving with the weight and speed of a commercial aircraft. More immediate action must be taken and travelers deserve to know how airlines are responding to these near-aircraft collisions.

¹ [Air Travel Consumer Report: December 2022, Full Year 2022 Airline Complaint Data](#)

² [FAA Establishes Independent Aviation Safety Review Team](#)

Given these concerns, I request responses to the following questions:

1. Is your airline intentionally scheduling flights knowing that delays and cancellations are likely?
2. How do you intend to modify your future service to ensure that less flights are cancelled or delayed?
3. What do you identify as the core contributing factors to the recent surge in close calls?
4. How is your airline ensuring passenger safety from aircraft collisions and what updates to your safety procedures are you pursuing to prevent close calls?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator