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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
FAA Presentation on Runway Safety Enhancements at Santa Monica Airport
Santa Monica City Council
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From more than seven years, I have joined the community and the City of Santa Monica in discussions with the FAA about the need for runway safety improvements at Santa Monica Airport.

While I had hoped that the recent push by Mr. Shaffer and FAA management would bring about a workable solution, I am deeply disappointed that the FAA's decision falls short of the safety needs of the airport, the flying public, and the neighboring community.

Unfortunately, the FAA's proposal provides the barest minimum of runway safety enhancements. Barebones safety is an unacceptable solution for a facility situated on a steep hilltop amid a bustling neighborhood of homes as close as 250 feet to the runway.

My greatest concern is that the FAA's decision-making process evaluated only the risks and needs of pilots and passengers without considering the important role of Runway Safety Areas in protecting pedestrians and homes on the ground. In doing so, the FAA failed to strike an appropriate balance between the convenience of private flights and the safety of the general public.

Standard FAA guidelines for an airport with Santa Monica's design prescribe a 300 foot Runway Safety Area. While the FAA has stated that the inclusion of EMAS technology would facilitate a shorter safety area, it has insisted on the smallest possible system designed to stop only half of the largest aircraft departing the runway. Regrettably, the FAA rejected requests by Santa Monica Airport officials to augment its proposal with other modifications, such as declared distances to enhance the margins of safety for aircraft operations.

Additionally, the FAA's proposal assumes unrealistic measures to build out the runway length that would compromise the airport's safety access road. And, it ignores the need for measures to mitigate the risk of accidents involving small aircraft, which are too light to be captured by the EMAS system.

Runway safety enhancements for Santa Monica are a necessity. The urgency grows each day as flight traffic at Santa Monica increases and larger planes use the airport more frequently.

I intend to pursue every option to ensure adequate and appropriate safety measures are instituted at Santa Monica Airport.