



11/8/2023

10102 Aircraft Lane
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To whom it may concern:

As an air traffic controller and a safety professional, we are often reminded of the “Swiss Cheese” model of accident causation and risk management. The model shows that in a complex system, such as air traffic control, hazards are prevented from catastrophe by a series of barriers. In theory, lapses and weaknesses in one defense do not allow a risk to materialize, since multiple layers of defenses also exist.

Here at AUS ATCT, I have confidence in the controllers and supervisors I work with to continue to put their best effort forward to achieving a safe, orderly, and expeditious air traffic system, and minimizing opportunities for risk and thus catastrophe to develop. However, I feel this system can be strengthened with the addition of support and resources that is highlighted by the Austin City Council.

AUS airport has grown by 30% since pre-COVID levels. With this growth in traffic, there has not been an equal growth at the AUS ATCT in staffing or resources to manage the growth. We are thus left with a staffing number and resources that are set up for a slower airport and a less congested airspace. As I

mentioned above we are doing the best we can with what we have. However, I believe to safely mitigate risks to our air traffic system we must move forward with an increase in staffing numbers and a focus on controller retention along with support systems such as ground radar implementation and a ramp control system at the AUS airport.

We currently have what is called a Class C airspace around the Austin airport which requires pilots to talk to us when they are close to the airport. It has become apparent to us that there is a need for an upgraded Class B airspace around the airport. This would allow a more sterile airspace around the airport for arriving and departing passenger planes and the largest airport in our airspace. This inevitably creates a safer operation into and out of the AUS airport. These are just to name a few changes that we need to work towards the goal of increased safety.

I want to make it clear that since I am an FAA employee, my opinions may not represent those of the FAA. Yet, I can assure you they are opinions that many of my colleagues and I agree would lead to a safer, more efficient, and more orderly means operation at and surrounding the Austin airport. I support the City of Austin and their efforts to create more barriers to catastrophe in our “Swiss Cheese” model for risk aversion. I look forward to helping in any way we are contractually allowed to provide assistance and I ask for your support in this endeavor as well.

Sincerely,

Blake Futrell