

Statement of Scott Foose  
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House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
Subcommittee on Aviation  
Commercial Aviation Oversight Hearing

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Chairman Petri, Ranking Member Costello, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify at this hearing.

Regional airlines provide half of our nation's scheduled flights, serving more than 600 airports nationwide. At nearly three-quarters of those airports, regional airlines are the only source of scheduled air service. Given this tremendous role we play in keeping America connected, safety is critically important – indeed, the paramount priority – for regional airlines.

Three years ago, RAA testified before this committee after a fatal accident, in order to discuss our members' commitment to safety. Our overarching goal has always been and always will be zero accidents and we pledged at that time that RAA's member airlines would continue to work tirelessly to improve upon and enhance our strong safety culture. We also outlined several important safety initiatives we already had in place while sharing our plans to go even further.

I want to take this opportunity to brief you on four areas in particular; safety information sharing, voluntary safety programs, pilot fatigue and first officer qualifications.

### **Safety Information Sharing**

When it comes to sharing of safety information, regardless of the size of the fleet or the name on the aircraft, our goal is that all airlines will work together as a team, which will improve safety overall for the industry and most importantly, for our employees and passengers.

RAA has always been a proponent of education and information-sharing among our members through our well-organized structure of executive councils and technical committees. Since 2009, we have expanded the program by bringing senior regional airline Operations and Safety Department executives together to discuss safety trends and the most important issues affecting the industry. The group also provides a conduit

through which our members periodically meet with officials from the NTSB and FAA headquarters.

These meetings have been incredibly valuable and we have gone much farther by expanding our involvement in safety forums well beyond the scope of RAA's membership. For example, regional airlines played a key role in the NTSB's Code Sharing Symposium, which provided the Board and traveling public with an opportunity to see how code-sharing partners work together to share safety information.

Airlines continually look for opportunities to exchange information to improve our awareness of safety concerns and trends. Information-sharing forums ensure all airlines are moving forward together. For instance, all of our part 121 airline members participate in safety committees established by code-sharing airline families. Additionally, they are active participants in the InfoShare Program, which is co-sponsored by FAA and the airlines. At recent InfoShare meetings, approximately half of the attendees and briefings were from regional airlines. The message here is that regional airlines are not only committed participants but they are taking on leadership roles.

We certainly have made great strides in creating a multi-layered structure of programs for sharing information. Safety information now transcends boundaries and is being shared freely between airlines flying under the same livery. It is being shared by airlines within the associations' committee structures. It is being shared by all operators under the InfoShare and ASIAs programs. Ultimately, we are very confident these efforts will enable every airline to stay on top of the latest trends and best practices.

### **Voluntary Safety Programs**

Three years ago the FAA Administrator asked regional airlines to examine participation in two voluntary safety programs in particular; Advanced Qualifications and Flight Operations Quality Assurance programs. Although in 2009, the FAA's focused inspection of all airlines with conventional training programs gave regional airlines very good marks, we took action. Regional airlines are firmly committed to accelerating our transition to those key programs.

RAA members have already achieved extremely high participation levels in a list of gold-standard, voluntary safety programs. While 70 percent of all airlines have at least one of these safety programs, RAA members exceed that by a wide margin; with 100 percent participating in at least one. Additionally, and as the DOT's Inspector General has recognized in recent testimony, the majority of carriers that transitioned to AQP were regional airlines. In fact, RAA members have the *highest levels of participation* among all part 121 carriers in each of the key voluntary safety programs: ASAP, FOQA, AQP and Safety Management Systems.

## **Pilot Training**

Because pilot training is such an important issue for airlines and for this committee, it's appropriate to provide a report on our advancements. While I would not expect carriers with very small fleets to participate in AQP, it is important to mention how many of RAA's members have made the transition. 25 percent of all 121 carriers have AQP. By comparison, 66 percent of RAA's members have this program.

We are quite proud of this very important accomplishment, which we attribute to the commitment and dedication of RAA's members and their willingness to work together to share information about AQP best practices. More than two years ago, RAA created a working group to provide a forum for that purpose. The group meets three times a year to bring together airlines with mature programs alongside those that are in the early phases of development. While RAA is the proud sponsor, this group is completely open to all operators, not just RAA members. At the last meeting I attended, we had 22 airlines in attendance, of which 18 were regionals and 4 were major airlines. This activity has received fantastic support from the FAA's office of Aviation Flight Standards and in particular from the Voluntary Safety Programs office.

The second program that I want to discuss is Flight Operations Qualify Assurance. In 2009, regional airlines drew criticism because only two of RAA members had a FOQA program in place at that time. Since that time, we have made considerable progress in this area. Today, 79 percent of our part 121 members have FOQA in place. This is all the more impressive knowing that RAA's members had significant equipage obstacles to overcome in order to participate. By comparison, 46 percent of all airlines have FOQA. I want to express my appreciation to the pilots and their associations, which have been key partners and share credit for this accomplishment.

## **Flight and Duty Time / Fatigue**

The Flight and Duty Time Final Rule published in December marked a significant milestone for the airline industry. For the first time, we will be using science to avoid and mitigate fatigue in the cockpit. Fatigue is a safety concern for all modes of transportation. Aviation is leading the effort to prevent further accidents and, RAA members, in particular, have made great strides in this area, by implementing Fatigue Risk Management Programs, which include training, procedures and non-punitive fatigue reporting.

While we view the new rule and Fatigue Risk Management Program as significant steps forward on a critical issue, we believe there is more work to be done. RAA is taking action. In 2009, the industry recognized the gap in the science available to understand

workload related fatigue. RAA initiated an independent, ground-breaking research study to fill this gap. This research, sponsored by RAA's members, is being conducted independently by Washington State University's Sleep and Research Performance Center. The study specifically focuses on filling the gap in the available science on fatigue as it relates to multi-segment operations.

The goal of the study is simple: we want to better understand the fatiguing effects of multi-segment operations on pilots so we can incorporate what we learn in our training, procedures and culture. I am happy to report that Phase 1 was completed within a year. WSU has created the first-ever computer model analyzing pilot schedules and identifying peak fatigue risks. We are excited about the results, but we have further to go. The next phase of the study will focus on validating the model using full-flight simulators and regional airline pilots. We are planning to be in the simulators in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year.

Not only are regional airlines fully prepared to comply with the new flight and duty rules, we have taken a leading role in fatigue research and training and will continue to work hard to ensure the highest levels of safety in this area.

### **Pilot Qualifications**

Finally, I want to briefly discuss the ongoing First Officer Qualifications rulemaking and, specifically, to address the allegation that regional airlines have "no plan in place" to comply with the public law, requiring all pilots to have an ATP certificate and 1500 flight hours. In fact, RAA's members have been busy developing transition programs. Several have already submitted their programs for FAA approval. Frankly, I did not expect these programs to be operational until July, but our members have already begun to transition their first officers. I can assure you that all of our pilots will have an ATP and 1500 hours by the effective date of the law, or they simply will not fly.

I would also like to talk about the ongoing Pilot Certification rulemaking. RAA is a committed and engaged stakeholder in the rulemaking process. With a pilot workforce of 18,000 and a veteran instructor workforce with years of training experience, we are confident we offer valuable insight. While RAA is still preparing our response, it is appropriate to share our concern that much of the burden of the proposed changes will disproportionately fall on regional airlines.

To be clear: RAA and its member airlines support nearly all of the important changes that the NPRM offers in the Proposed Rule. Yet, we will urge the FAA to more closely adhere to the recommendations of Congress and to consider the valuable conclusions reached by the First Officer Qualifications Aviation Rulemaking Committee in formulating its final rule.

The Airline Safety Act of 2010 raises the certification standard, but without additional action, there may be unintended consequences. Pilots not reaching age 23 will lose their jobs, students graduating from well-respected aviation programs will be disadvantaged and may find non-airline jobs or airline jobs in foreign countries more appealing, and students frustrated by the lack of financial support may find the less-rigorous route of flying pipeline patrol to be easier and more feasible than attending training from our best instructors in our best simulators.

If safety is the goal, than experience is part of the solution. It is my opinion and the opinion of many other industry veterans that “flight time” does not equal “experience.” We believe Congress understood this, having directed the FAA to develop an academic complement to the public law. The industry has a wealth of information, identifying several paths candidates can take that have proven to provide highly skilled and professional pilots. As the chairman of the rulemaking ARC, I was incredibly impressed with how well the participants worked together to make recommendations that they sincerely believe will improve safety.

The FOQ ARC’s deliberations responding to this assignment absorbed the most FOQ ARC member time and generated the liveliest discussions. Out of this effort, the FOQ ARC recommended an expansive and detailed methodology for crediting academic training against the hours of experience requirements for the certification of a first officer. A total of 14 distinct academic training alternatives were reviewed and evaluated, with credit recommendations made for each. Of those 14 alternatives, 12 are civil training experiences and two are military training experiences.

This FOQ ARC effort and the reasons for its recommendation will be more completely discussed in our comments to the docket, but it is important to consider the breadth of the ARC member’s efforts and recommendations in comparison to what is found in the Proposed Rule. In contrast to the 14 total training experiences (12 civil and two military) recommended by the ARC, the Proposed Rule offers allows only for two training experiences: one civil and one military.

Frankly, there are many pilots flying the line today that have flawless records; yet, if they were part of the next generation of airline pilots, these same pilots would be facing many more obstacles. These pilots have proven themselves as having the right stuff and yet the new law, without broader academic provisions, would have impeded their entry into our industry. I have to wonder how many of these professionals would have opted out of the excellent training programs to take the path of least resistance.

There has been considerable discussion in recent years about the need for skilled and motivated pilots. Just so I am clear in my message, the additional training proposed in the

NPRM clearly takes us a step further in the right direction and we feel it is warranted. We acknowledge the need for prescriptive standards but the FAA and NTSB have each recognized that flight time is not a good indication of experience or safety. Let me put it simply: four hours of fair weather sightseeing in a Skyhawk has minimal benefit as compared to four hours in a modern simulator with a highly trained, professional flight instructor. The rulemaking process is the opportunity for those of us in the industry and the FAA to use our own experience to promote the highest quality training and education, which will yield pilots with the needed skills. Our concern is that if we do not take advantage of this opportunity, we will be encouraging the next generation of pilots to merely build hours, when what we really need is experience in our cockpits. Again, flight time is not the same thing as experience.

With respect to the public law, RAA's members are complying. This has already reduced the availability of new pilots. Unless the FAA's new rule recognizes the value and experience the structured training programs provide, the burden will now shift to tomorrow's pilots. The implication here is not diminished safety, but diminished service to smaller communities. One RAA member airline estimates that for every 30 pilots displaced by the new rule, one community will lose service. Initial estimates of the pilot shortage expected under the new rule have projected a shortfall of approximately 2300 pilots. This translates to imperiled air service at upwards of 75 communities if the rule is enacted as proposed.

RAA is currently drafting comments for the docket where we will share our full perspective and offer recommendations. We would be glad to discuss our comments in greater detail with any member of this committee as they are completed.

## **Conclusion**

In the three years since we last testified before this committee, our 60,000 regional airline employees have operated nearly 15 million flights, at a pace of 13,000 flights each day. In fact, today is the safest period of time in commercial aviation history. We are proud of our contribution to that record, although we will never become complacent.

Every day and every flight, RAA member airlines operate to or above exacting part 121 safety standards. It is our hope that our deeds, which have gone well beyond the rules, demonstrate to you and to each of our passengers that we are fully committed to the safe operation of each and every regional airline flight, every single day.

We fully embrace the FAA's System Safety oversight and have made increasing use of FAA's many important voluntary safety programs, as well as the new SMS initiatives to that end. As we continue to take proactive steps, as industry collaborators and as industry

leaders, to make this safe industry even safer, we welcome the opportunity to continue this dialogue with you.

There have been so many successes in the last three years and few should doubt our resolve and commitment to safety. It is our most important goal and obligation. Flying is the safest form of transportation and we will continue to work hard every day to keep it that way.

That concludes my statement. I look forward to taking your questions at the conclusion of the panel.

Thank you.



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Bio:

Scott is Senior Vice President, Operations and Safety at the Regional Airline Association. RAA's primary role is to represent the interests of member airlines in North America before the Legislative and Executive branches of the federal government in Washington, D.C. Scott works directly with key officials at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration and other stakeholder organizations on a wide variety of issues pertaining to public policy, regulations and industry programs and practices. He is the staff senior advisor for industry affairs, chairman of RAA's Regional Operations Council and he is the senior staff member supporting RAA's Safety Council. He has represented the industry as a participant of several notable FAA aviation rulemaking committees including the Flight and Duty Time ARC and the First Officer Qualifications ARC, which he chaired.

Before joining RAA, he was with Allegheny Airlines for 21 years, holding several positions in the airline's flight operations and corporate safety departments. During his tenure he was a line pilot, pilots' association officer, check airman, and he held senior management positions as the Chief Pilot, Director of Flight Standards and Director of Safety and Regulatory Compliance. Scott's training, operating experience and management experience in commercial air carrier operations, and his ongoing work on emerging regulatory and policy issues gives him an insightful perspective of the critical issues facing the air transportation industry today.

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*With safety as its highest priority, the Regional Airline Association (RAA) represents North American regional airlines before federal legislative and regulatory agencies, and also provides technical, educational, and promotional support to member airlines and their supply company partners. RAA's 27 member airlines operate one half of all U.S. scheduled passenger flights and carry more than one in five domestic passengers. RAA members serve more than 600 U.S. airports, and some 75 percent of those airports depend on regional airlines, exclusively, for their only source of scheduled air service.*

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
*Truth in Testimony Disclosure*

Pursuant to clause 2(g)(5) of House Rule XI, in the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include: (1) a curriculum vitae; and (2) a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Such statements, with appropriate redaction to protect the privacy of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness appears.

(1) Name:

Scott W. Foose

(2) Other than yourself, name of entity you are representing:

Regional Airline Association

(3) Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government (federal, state, local) entity?

YES

If yes, please provide the information requested below and attach your curriculum vitae.

NO

(4) Please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by you or by the entity you are representing:

None

Signature

Scott W. Foose

Date

4/20/12