



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, & TRANSPORTATION

U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper
Nomination Hearing for Phil Washington to be Administrator of the Federal
Aviation Administration
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

March 1, 2023

Introduction Remarks:

[VIDEO](#)

HICKENLOOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. We need an FAA administrator who is Senate-confirmed, but also who knows how to get things done. An administrator who can manage the complex bureaucracy at FAA, and prepare it for the realities of modern air travel today. Someone who can give us confidence the next time we get on a flight, someone who will reassure us that we'll get where we're going safely, and not have to think about how everything works again. That's Phil Washington.

Phil came from humble beginnings. As the Madam Chair mentioned, [he] served 24 years in the Army, achieved the rank of Command Sergeant Major, the highest rank for enlisted servicemen. Command Sergeants Majors are the people that get things done by organizing, motivating their troops, delivering on the mission and holding people accountable. He was stationed in Fort Carson, Colorado, the beginning of his relationship with Colorado.

Our veterans are renowned for their discipline, their leadership, their courage, their dedication to service. Phil embodies all these traits and more. When he led Metro Denver's Regional Transportation District, which is by far the largest transit agency in the state, he put our city's transit system back on track. He came in when the flagship Fast Track program was over budget, was behind schedule, beset by problems and complications. When he left three-quarters was completed or under construction.

He next took the helm of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the third-largest transit system in the country, serving over 220 million passengers annually. Again, another multi-billion-dollar expansion, which was beset by challenges and he got that sorted out.

He's now the CEO of Denver International Airport for the last couple years. The third-busiest airport in the world as the madam chair pointed out, he has transformed the airport's once aging infrastructure.

The Great Hall project is going to expand the DIA's terminal capacity from 70 million passengers a year to 100 million passengers a year. His program Vision 100 will support that transition by the end of this decade. Phil recognizes growth is more than just expanding terminals and modernizing runways. He's launched DIA's Center of Equity and Excellence in aviation. It's a first of its kind training facility to make sure we can grow a diverse workforce and a small business pipeline in aviation that does deliver on the combined mission of transportation at the safest possible levels. He's not hesitated to act decisively again and again when a crisis strikes. We had the winter storms of 2022 that devastated air travel all across the country, damaged our economy. He immediately launched a rigorous after-action review between DIA and its major airline partners. This after-action review will identify the causes to the airline disruption catastrophe and prevent future incidents from happening again. That's the kind of decisive action that we need to see in the FAA.

Phil fits the mold of several past administrators. There have been questions raised as to previous administrators. Jane Garvey, who was the administrator under the President Clinton came from the Massachusetts Department of Public Works and led Boston's Logan Airport. Marion Blakey, who served in the Bush administration, was Administrator of the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration before coming to the FAA. Michael Huerta oversaw the Ports of New York City in San Francisco and had a couple of senior roles within Department of Transportation before coming to lead the FAA.

But I think Phil breaks the mold of past FAA administrators in important ways. He's not an airline industry insider using this role as a position for the industry to be policing itself. The challenges facing FAA are those of managing a large complex bureaucracy badly in need of modernization. And certainly, in that respect, he's no novice. He's the CEO of the third-busiest airport in the world, as we've said, manages a workforce roughly of 35,000 employees compared to 45,000 at FAA, so roughly the same size. And he took the role of a big expansion project that was running into budget challenges, scheduling challenges before he came along, and he got back on track. And this is not to mention his experience in the army where he honed his discipline and leadership skills and was recognized for it.

He's built a reputation of coming into organizations filled with challenges and successfully transforming them into successes. He takes on the big complex problems and gets results. This is the kind of person we want in our federal management system. It is for those reasons, I urge this committee to be thoughtful and objectively look at Phil's record and what it shows. He's the right man and nominated at the right time to lead this critical agency. I look forward to seeing where he can lead the FAA with his bold vision for the future. Thank you.