Air Traffic Control Essay, Research Paper

Air Traffic Control

What Seems to Be the Problem/Solutions?

Eight of the country s busiest airports have significant delays; unable to operate without delays even under optimum conditions (1). This has been a problem the FAA has been dealing with for a long time. Trying to step up to the plate, the FAA planned on spending well above 5 billion dollars to implement a program, not knowing then, but would bring discredit to the FAA even to this day. What seems to be the problem? How do we fix this problem without resorting to a major development plan, such as, the FAA s Advanced Automated Plan which by all accounts was, to little, to late.

FAA in its annual aviation conference and forecast, predicts a 39 percent increase in

takeoffs and landings by the year 2012. A rise in air travel from almost 26 million in 2000

to 36 million in 2012. The number of passengers flying each year on U.S. airlines is

projected to rise from 733 million in 2000 to 1.2 billion in 2012 (2). With this increase in

air travel and the inability of the current air traffic system to even handle today s numbers, there has been a mad dash in trying to come up with solutions on how to revamp the air traffic control system.

Some of suggestions came from some unlikely people, such as, Sen. John McCain of Arizona. His suggestion was to privatize the system. This idea fell into some major opposition from many freedom action groups, like the AOPA. The AOPA claims with privatizing the system air traffic controllers will give the airliners priority over most general aviation aircraft flying, which in turn will cause safety issues involving all aircraft (3). AOPA took the numbers from country s currently using the corporate ATC system, like Canada, and analyzed the numbers and came up with its findings, published in Congressional Committee hearings on The Advancement of the Air Traffic System . Findings showing how air traffic controllers gives the general aviation public the back seat when it comes to approaches and departures in and out of major air traffic regions.

The FAA isn t the only blame for this on going problem. Airlines has increase there passenger loads and flights by more then 50 percent in the last 10 years. With the increase in air travelers, the airlines increase the flights coming and going. With this increase they needed to increase there fleet of aircraft. From 1997 to 2000, airlines has ordered more then 1,400 additional aircraft. This increase in aircraft bought was more then what was purchased in the last 15 years.

Speaking to controllers and pilot s today you ll find, nine times out of ten, weather plays a major part in delays. Because weather is so unpredictable, it has become the mission of all involve in the revamping the system to establish a better weather reporting system. Currently a pilot can only get a weather brief for a flight an hour out. With only knowing how the weather is going to be an hour ahead, flight dispatchers and pilots can t predict what the weather is going to be like at there destination leg if there flights are 2 to 3 hours long.. Because of this when weather pops on your screen 2 hrs into your 3 hour flight, you have to change your flight plan and advert to an alternate airport or have air traffic control vector you around the weather; which in some cases can delay your flight for at least 30 minutes. Once a flight has been delayed its like a ripple affect, because other flights have to be delayed trying to wait on the inbound passengers on the original delayed flight. Officials are trying to redo the old way of thinking of only one hour ahead, and is calling for different organizations to come up with a plan so ATC, pilots, and flight dispatchers are able to see at least 6 hours ahead. This will enable all affected by weather to plan for it in advance. In the long run cut delays and cancellations.

According to the FAA and Mitre Corporation, they found improvements in air traffic control will bring at best a 5 to 15 percent enhancement to ATC system capacity (4). They also found that adding one runway to a major airport can increase its capacity between 40 and 80 percent (5). With increased capacity airliners won t have to wait long periods of time in holding patterns, waiting to land; on taxiways, waiting to takeoff; or in terminals waiting for ground control to clear you to your predetermined runway. Unfortunately, because increase in public opinion against loud construction, low flying planes over residential homes, traffic delays, and increase in general population. Residents vote against construction of a new runway and sometimes go as far as voting to close existing airports. In 1969 there were a total of 6,700 airports available for public use. Today, there are approximately 5,100 in the United States, which means there is one general aviation airport closed every week do to opposition (6).

ATC and the FAA will be closely watched in the next ten years. A decrease in flight delays will be the battle cry during this time by the general consumers and Congress. With the FAA s back to the wall, many independent companies like the, Boeing Corporation has come up with plans to decrease flight time and can be implemented in the current air traffic system with, not so much as a glitch, using GPS technology. Whether this plan will work or any other plan devised to remedy air traffic problems. Something good can still come out of this. Even though we are a little behind the power curve, at least we know where the curve is, and where trying to find solutions on how to catch up. Instead of waiting until there is a total melt down in the system, and hundreds or thousands of people loose their lives. So, what is the cause of the major delays in the air traffic systems? My answer is: Everyone who turned there back to the idea of expanding the Air Traffic system, who felt there was no need at the time. Even when there was evidence that the ATC System could not handle the loads they had at the time. Instead converting money the money to other programs like: The study of why do earth worms make good fishing bate.

Work Sited

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