



# Federal Aviation Administration

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## Memorandum

Date: February 19, 2009  
To: All Personnel  
From: Kevin Stark, Acting Air Traffic Manager *KS*  
Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center  
Subject: Denver Traffic

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I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the level of professionalism and commitment to our mission you have displayed over the last couple of weeks while dealing with the changes in the flow into the Denver Airport. I know a lot of you have expressed frustration with the constraints this has put on the system and the uncertainty that changes of this magnitude create, but your continued efforts to minimize the impacts to the system users has been extraordinary.

Let me try and explain what got us to this point and what we can expect in the future. This facility has enjoyed a relationship with the Denver TRACON for many years that has maximized the access to the runways for the users in the most expeditious manner possible. This has resulted in a high AAR and a large number of configurations for the airport with numerous configuration changes occurring on a routine basis. This flexibility and accessibility did not come without expense, and as the demand on the airport has continued to increase the situation has become untenable for the TRACON.

The TRACON has indicated that the loss of a large number of their experienced employees, the relative inexperience of many of their current controllers, and the increase in volume has created a situation that they can no longer accept. They have indicated that the volume issues created by eight different routes flowing into their airspace routinely creates situations that put their controllers at risk, and they are unable to provide the level of service our customers deserve.

We have attempted to work with the TRACON to identify various alternatives in order to address their concerns while maintaining the level of access and throughput we have in the past been able to provide. We also brought in an outside team with En Route, Terminal and SysOps experience to evaluate the operations at both the Center and the TRACON. The team made several recommendations, however the TRACON did not feel the team's recommendations, if implemented, would resolve their issues. Facility managers are ultimately responsible for the safe operation of their facility, and the facility manager at the TRACON determined that he could no longer accept aircraft in the manner that we have historically provided them. Based

upon these factors, TRACON identified the Primary/Secondary routes through each of the gates along with the mile-in-trail requirements they felt were necessary. Once that decision was made Denver Center had no choice but to take steps to maintain the safest possible operation while also minimizing, to the extent possible, the impact to our customers. Denver Center SYSOPS personnel worked long hours in a very short timeframe to put restrictions on the first tier facilities and advisories out to the users to ensure you had the assistance needed to comply with the TRACON's needs.

Two issues became immediately apparent to us as we implemented the plan. First, the RAMMS/TOMSN configuration was causing a major impact to both this facility and the users. Second, the TRACON's route structures were incompatible in many instances with our automation processing. Through dialog with the TRACON we were able to correct many of the problems in the NW gate.

The automation issues however, continue to be problematic. The timing of this change could not have been worse for us from an automation perspective. ERAM is in a very critical phase and currently has almost exclusive use of our automation resources. ERAM implementation also has necessitated a moratorium on any automation changes. The reality is that we will have to continue to deal with the automation issues for the next several months. My initial hope was that we would be able to revert back to something resembling our previous flows and not have to impact our automation; however it does not appear that will occur. I can assure you that as soon as possible, we will take steps to correct the identified automation issues.

This brings us to what the future holds. For the long term, the Airspace Management Program Office in Washington has identified two areas in the Western Service Area they will be focusing on: Los Angeles and Denver. What this means is they have allocated funding and resources to do an airspace design study, and begin the process for airspace redesign. This process will involve Denver Center to a large degree, and is important for the long term health of our facility. There will be involvement from all levels of our facility and gives us the opportunity to prepare for future traffic increases along with correcting current problems we experience. But as I stated, this is a long term project and we do not anticipate any immediate results from this effort. In the near term we will continue to work with the TRACON to identify areas we feel are problematic for both Denver Center and the users. We will continue to be mindful of the TRACON's identified issues while looking for ways to improve the service to our customers and increase our flexibility.

Through numerous conversations with many facility personnel over the last couple of weeks, what stands out to me are your questions and concerns have been about the level and quality of service we are providing. It is a clear example of the pride you take in the job that you do and your desire for a safer more efficient system. Since arriving at Denver Center, I am continually amazed by the level of professionalism and service this facility routinely demonstrates. How you have dealt with the challenges brought on by this change is another example of why Denver Center is considered to be one of the finest facilities in the country.