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The Honorable Patricia Schroeder  
House of Representatives

Dear Mrs. Schroeder:

Your letter dated July 16, 1973, enclosed a copy of a letter from Mr. Dick Nolan, an airplane owner and pilot, expressing concern about the cost of complying with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements for electronic equipment for general aviation aircraft. He also said that, according to a report by the National Association of State Aviation Officials, at least 11 States have refused Federal assistance in their aviation programs because the Federal assistance program was wasteful. You asked whether the General Accounting Office had investigated or would consider an investigation of FAA's requirements for aircraft and airports.

Our work at the FAA has not specifically addressed this aspect of the agency's operations. As discussed with your office, a full-scale review and evaluation of Federal safety and other requirements for aircraft and airports would be a major undertaking. While this subject would warrant attention as part of our continuing work at FAA, manpower resources are not available at this time to commit to a comprehensive effort of this magnitude. As agreed with your office, however, we are furnishing the following information relating to Mr. Nolan's concerns.

The number of general aviation aircraft has increased from about 95,000 in 1965 to 131,000 in 1972, and it is estimated that the number will increase to about 160,000 by 1978. For the 5 years ended 1972, there have been an average of 4,700 general aviation accidents and 1,400 fatalities each year. One of FAA's major concerns in carrying out its responsibility of promoting flight safety of civil aircraft in the United States is the location and identity of aircraft in the Nation's airspace. FAA has determined that aircraft using controlled enroute airspace (airspace in air route corridors designated by FAA) and terminal control area airspace (the airspace around certain types of airports) shall be required to install and use certain avionics equipment as aids to identification and location.

These equipment requirements were established by FAA under its regulatory rulemaking process. This process permits all interested parties to comment on proposed regulations for FAA's consideration prior to the issuance of new regulations. Mr. Nolan expressed

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concern regarding the cost of implementing these requirements. The three newly required items of equipment are described below.

Transponder - A device that automatically transmits information from an aircraft to ground radar equipment for use by personnel responsible for directing and controlling aircraft traffic. By January 1, 1975, all aircraft using controlled enroute airspace above 12,500 feet or controlled airspace around an airport will have to have transponders. Costs of this device range from \$400 to \$5,000.

Emergency Locator Transmitter - A battery operated device that transmits a signal automatically so that an aircraft can be located in case of a crash. Fixed-wing aircraft made in, or imported into, the United States, except certain jet aircraft, agricultural aircraft, and training aircraft, must have an approved transmitter installed by December 29, 1973. Costs of this device range from \$125 to \$5,000.

Altitude Reporting Altimeter - A device that transmits altitude information to ground equipment monitored by personnel responsible for directing and controlling aircraft traffic. These altimeters are expected to be mandatory on all aircraft using controlled airspace around an airport after January 1, 1974, and on all aircraft using controlled enroute airspace above 12,500 feet after July 1, 1975. Costs of this device range from \$600 to \$5,000.

The wide range of costs of these devices is the result of differences in optional features and the size and type of aircraft in which the devices are to be installed. Generally, avionics equipment for the larger, more powerful and sophisticated aircraft is more costly.

Mr. Nolan indicated that at least 11 States had refused Federal funds for their aviation programs. While some airport projects in the 11 States have been wholly financed with non-Federal funds, Federal grant assistance has been requested and received for other (generally more costly) projects in these same States. For example, FAA expenditures of grant funds for airport projects in these States in fiscal years 1972 and 1973 are shown below. The 1973 amounts are based on preliminary figures.

<u>State</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
Alabama	\$ 863,300	\$2,770,100
Arizona	861,400	4,971,000
Idaho	340,700	2,147,600
Iowa	441,000	2,622,700
Kansas	1,487,200	575,000
Michigan	1,825,000	7,332,200
Minnesota	1,482,100	1,864,000
Mississippi	1,546,900	1,540,700
Montana	1,119,900	1,202,000
Nebraska	1,784,900	2,170,800
West Virginia	453,900	3,594,200

We trust the information furnished above will be helpful to  
you.

Sincerely yours,

Deputy

R.F.KELLER

Comptroller General  
of the United States