For Immediate Release **May 18, 2026**

2026-2028 CONTROLER WORKFORCE PLAN BASED ON FLAWED TRANSPORTATION REVIEW BOARD STUDY

WASHINGTON – On Friday, May 15, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued its 2026-2028 Controller Workforce Plan (CWP) that is based on the findings contained *The Air Traffic Controller Workforce Imperative* report issued by National Academies of Sciences Transportation Review Board in June 2025.

As we stated in our June 18, 2025, press statement: "*The findings in this report are based on a staffing model that has proven to be the root cause of the staffing crisis we now face. It was not a valid approach to staffing in 2014 when the National Academies first endorsed it, and it certainly is not appropriate to double down on this failed approach to controller staffing in 2025".*

NATCA was not involved in the development of the CWP and was surprised that the FAA has adopted, as the basis for its most recent CWP, the National Academies' report insisted upon by the Biden Administration to be included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy has recognized the need to increase hiring of air traffic controllers. He has the vision to break with the past philosophy that says things are good enough, when they are obviously not working properly. NATCA has endorsed and continues to support the Secretary's plan to supercharge the hiring of air traffic controllers and improve controller staffing throughout the FAA. His efforts have already improved the hiring process.

We are also grateful that Congress included mandatory maximum hiring of air traffic controller trainees for five years in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Congress' intent and the FAA's commitment to implement maximum hiring will serve as a backstop against an inaccurate Certified Professional Controllers staffing target.

NATCA will continue to work with Secretary Duffy, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, Administrator Bedford, Congress, and industry stakeholders to ensure that America has the air traffic control staffing it needs and deserves as aviation continues to grow.

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The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) is a labor union and aviation safety organization in the United States that represents nearly 20,000 highly skilled air traffic controllers, engineers, and other aviation safety-related professionals. NATCA was certified in 1987 by the Federal Labor Relations Authority to be the exclusive bargaining representative for air traffic controllers employed by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Today, NATCA is one of the strongest labor unions in the federal sector and represents a range of aviation safety professionals in 13 FAA bargaining units, five Department of Defense air traffic facilities, and 180 federal contract towers. These air traffic controllers and other aviation safety professionals make vital contributions to the U.S. economy and make modern life possible by coordinating the safe, orderly, and expeditious movement of one billion aviation passengers and millions of tons of freight within the National Airspace System each year. NATCA is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and is affiliated with the AFL-CIO.