

Statement of Rep. Harry Mitchell  
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
Subcommittee on Aviation  
2/13/08

--Thank you Mr. Chairman.

--As we consider steps to stop runway incursions, I believe it is important for us to carefully review the GAO's findings and address both human and technological factors.

--Our air traffic controllers are retiring at an alarming rate -- 70 percent are eligible to retire over the next 10 years. Staffing shortages are already forcing many of them to work overtime, often 6-days a week. This creates fatigue and, according to the GAO, may be posing a risk to runway safety.

--Technologically, I believe it is important to support innovations that promise to increase runway safety. For example, the FAA is currently planning to install the Airport Surface Detection Equipment, Model X (ASED-X), a system designed to give air traffic controllers better visibility and help prevent collisions, at 35 airports nationwide.

-- If this technology can perform as promised, and be deployed nationally, it would greatly enhance passenger safety.

--Today we will be hearing from air traffic controllers as well as witnesses familiar with this exciting new technology. I look forward to their testimony, and at this time, I yield back.