

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Full Committee
“Nominations Hearing”
Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

REPUBLICAN QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Michael Graham

COVER PAGE

CHAIRMAN TED CRUZ (R-TX)

1. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), for nearly thirty years, has recommended Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast In (ADS-B In) equipage in aircraft. In July, I introduced S. 2503 the Rotorcraft Operations Transparency and Oversight Reform (ROTOR) Act. The ROTOR Act if enacted makes important aviation safety improvements, including the requirement for all aircraft, commercial, general aviation, and military, to receive ADS-B In.
 - a. Mr. Graham, how does the NTSB engage in advocating for implementation of safety recommendations, including legislation that implements NTSB recommendations?

Answer: Since the NTSB does not have regulatory or enforcement authority and cannot mandate adoption of our recommendations, we use a variety of tools to advocate for their implementation – including when legislative or regulatory changes are required. Below are examples of how we engage in our advocacy.

1. Safety Recommendation Process – After an investigation, we issue safety recommendations to agencies, industry groups, manufacturers, labor organizations, and/or other entities we believe can act to enhance safety. Each recommendation is tracked in a public database that is fully transparent, and the recipient must respond with actions taken or planned. Through this process, we are able to constantly engage with our recommendation recipients to continue encouraging them to enact our recommendations. The public is also able to track progress – or lack thereof – on these recommendations to increase accountability.

2. Legislative Advocacy – NTSB frequently recommends Congress or state legislatures enact laws to improve safety and satisfy our recommendations. In certain cases, additional regulatory authority is needed for entities to be able to enact our recommendations. In these cases, the NTSB will work directly with legislative bodies to advocate for that authority to be granted to the appropriate regulator. The Board also testifies before congressional committees, provides technical expertise, and submits formal correspondence to Congress detailing our activities and continuing to advocate for our recommendations.

3. Partnership with Regulatory Agencies – Since many of our recommendations are directed to federal regulators, we build relationships with these regulators so that we can better understand their abilities – and limitations – to carrying out our recommendations. The NTSB, as Congress designed, is not a punitive body, and therefore we continue to build on these relationships to ultimately create a safer transportation ecosystem.

4. Public Advocacy and Awareness – The NTSB strategically uses media, public events, and speaking engagements to raise awareness of recommendations that are stalled or ignored. Board Members and staff alike both use these forums to directly communicate with recommendation recipients, industry stakeholders, and the general public to emphasize the importance of enacting our recommendations.

- b. Would the widespread adoption of ADS-B In increase aviation safety, particularly around congested airports?

Answer: Yes, ADS-B In technology is another layer of safety that can be added to improve situational awareness and safety for pilots flying in Class B airspace, or any congested airspace.

SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK)

1. Mr. Graham, as you may know, many communities in Alaska rely almost entirely on aviation for year-round access to basic goods, services, and medical care. Yet many airports in Alaska still lack usable instrument flight procedures due to outdated design standards, excessive minimums, or multi-year backlogs in FAA approval. These limitations often make published instrument approaches less usable than visual flight rules, even in poor weather.

Meanwhile, non-FAA service providers have shown that they can develop more precise, lower-minimum procedures using modern GPS-based technology, but they receive no federal support and often cannot publish their procedures for public use under current FAA policies.

- Given your background as a pilot and your leadership role at the NTSB, do you believe that accelerating the availability of safe, modern instrument procedures — including through FAA collaboration with authorized third-party providers — would improve flight safety in regions like Alaska?

Answer: I have been very outspoken during my first term about the need for all pilots – veterans and novices alike – to maintain currency and proficiency on instruments. Having traveled to Alaska during my term and discussing these issues with various stakeholders in Alaska’s aviation community, I fully agree that we need to accelerate the availability of safe, modern instrument procedures to help improve aviation safety in Alaska. We need more instrument flight rules (IFR) routes and procedures instead of the current status quo that heavily relies on visual flight rules scud running which, more often than not, can put pilots into the weather without IFR options. These scenarios can eventually lead to an accident, which is why IFR options are so important.

- And if confirmed, would you be willing to look for opportunities to amplify that message through the NTSB’s safety advocacy mission, so that decision-makers at FAA better understand the safety value of these efforts?

Answer: I commit to working with you, your team, our team based in Anchorage, and any other aviation stakeholders in Alaska to amplify the need for improved instrument procedures and routes with the FAA or any other entities that need to understand the serious implications of not having these in place.