I think it is history in this committee, Mr. Chairman, that the FAA tried several years ago to reduce the number of these facilities, flight service stations, rather unsuccessfully, I might say. They have curtailed weather broadcasts in many areas, which is compounding the situation as far as the pilot is concerned.

The transcribed weather broadcasts, which are on low frequency and are used by many pilots, particularly in outlying areas, at home, the ranch or the farm, to obtain preflight weather information, have been reduced despite pilot objections.

There further at the moment is a program underway to additionally reduce the scheduled broadcasts on our omni or VOR facilities. We are watching this very closely and we hope this will not further derogate the weather services to the pilot.

Several years ago the FAA made a test of a direct pilot-to-forecaster radio link so that the pilot who was in flight and encountered some unusual weather conditions could call to the ground and talk directly to the forecaster in the Weather Bureau and then get some advice as to what this condition was that he happened to see ahead of him or that was coming up on him. That was a test. The test was terminated, and despite the fact that the overwhelming consensus of pilots was that this was a worthwhile service in the interest of safety, we have not gotten it back.

Until recently it looked as though the FAA had developed a scheme whereby the pilot could call the flight service station and the flight service station would plug him through to the forecaster on what we call a patch cord arrangement through a telephone line. Even this idea has been allowed to die on the vine, despite the fact that we have a frequency that could be used for this by both the airline pilots and ourselves. So we do need action on this.

Our next recommendation was to improve pilot briefing facilities so that pilots have access to this information at more locations. There has been a program worked out jointly between industry and the FAA for a better network of flight service stations designed to provide essential services, including weather briefing, to pilots on a much wider and much more effective basis. They would consist of a basic network of full-time stations, supplemented by a number of smaller part-time stations located on the busier general aviation airports.

We have seen nothing in the way of action to implement this proposal, even though apparently it has agreement within the FAA and has the wholehearted support of the general aviation industry.

Our last recommendation, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the need for general aviation airport facilities. I stress the word facilities because I am talking more than just the airports.

We recommend that the emphasis of the national airport plan be redirected to provide adequate facilities for general aviation, including short parallel runways on major airports, good satellite airports in major metropolitan areas, and an improved system of general aviation airports and facilities in areas where the need exists.

To briefly summarize the need for this, a general aviation aircraft quite frequently has need to use a major airport. This need can arise from a number of things. He may have connecting passengers for the airlines—and one airline has estimated that 30,000 of their passengers last year were brought to the airport or taken away from the airport