

PETER R. PASTRE  
VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Al Green  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-43

The Honorable Sylvia Garcia  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510-43

Dear Representatives Green and Garcia:

This responds to your February 22 letter to John DiPeri and Larry Wagener regarding operations at the South Houston Local Processing Center (LPC) and the North Houston Regional Processing Distribution Center (RPDC). Postal officials appreciated the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the operations at these facilities and issues that caused service delays for your constituents in recent weeks. I note that your letter is dated the same day as we provided a second staff tour and briefing, so I recognize it might not fully reflect that interaction.

As we discussed in our briefing, the Houston area is undergoing transformation through our Delivering for America plan that will help improve organizational and operational processes so that the Postal Service can be an efficient, world-class logistics and delivery provider. Houston was selected as one of the first areas for transformation due to legacy challenges that impacted how efficiently both incoming and outgoing mail and packages could be processed and delivered. The goal of this transformation is to improve service while lowering the cost to operate and simultaneously provide better workplaces and careers for Postal Service employees.

As one example, Houston had multiple facilities that sorted mail and packages leaving the Houston area, which added unnecessary time and logistical complications to the delivery of our customers' mail and packages, while increasing our operating costs. As part of the investments, we are currently making to Houston area facilities, all outgoing operations will occur in one site, which will have state of the art equipment and technology, helping to get your constituents' mail and packages to their final destinations faster and with less cost. The updated facilities will also result in a better work experience for our employees, as they will have improved lighting, flooring, more thoughtful layouts for a better workflow, an improved dock area, as well as employee amenities like restrooms, lockers, and break areas.

As we also discussed in our briefing, the Postal Service acknowledges there were several factors that complicated this transition in Houston. There were employee attendance issues, which were not appropriately and immediately addressed by management. (We also experienced equipment and transition failures as sorting equipment was removed from the North Houston RPDC and re-assembled at the South Houston LPC). Finally, the Houston area experienced several winter storms that affected operations. We dispatched additional resources to fix all the issues in our control, and we have seen meaningful improvements from conditions a few weeks ago.

## Responses to Your Questions

Part of our discussion, as well as the subject of your letter, was focused on how we can better communicate with Houston area residents about the steps we are taking to improve mail service. You suggested either a tour for the media or a press conference in Houston. As we hope you can now appreciate after our meeting, part of the delay in speaking to the media was our desire to fully identify and then address the root cause of the challenges within the North Houston facility undergoing renovations. It would have been premature and potentially misleading to address only some of the challenges before all factors were fully understood. We can do better, and you have our commitment to do so.

With regard to your multi-optioned requests for a media tour, we *are* willing to offer such a tour if there is remaining media interest. It is best if those requests come directly from interested media outlets and are communicated to our Corporate Communications group. That group can determine the best time and method for this tour. We do anticipate that recording devices *will be* permitted, but with some restrictions consistent with our typical rules that are intended to protect the sanctity of the mail and our employees. Congressional participation in media tours would not be appropriate.

Regarding your request for a "town hall"-style meeting, please know it has been considered and we must respectfully decline the suggestion. Given the breadth and scope of Postal Service operations nationwide, significant attention and resources have been devoted to monitoring service performance and to providing customer service. Experience has proven that extraordinary or one-off customer outreach events complicate these efforts, rarely provide any meaningful insights to improve operations, and raise questions about basic fairness. Instead, the Postal Service relies on a robust program to collect, analyze, and act on service performance issues and customer complaints and questions. Additionally, the Postal Service has in place substantial and transparent reporting to keep our customers well informed about our performance and the current state of operations.

Specifically, the Postal Service relies on multiple inputs to collect and answer customer complaints and questions.

- Customers can contact us online at <https://www.usps.com/help/contact-us.htm>. This site provides a variety of tips and answers to common questions, it provides a portal to register complaints, and it provides further points of contact with links to technical assistance.
- For customers who lack internet access or prefer an off-line conduit, we offer our Customer Care Call Center at 1-800-ASK-USPS(1-800-275-8777), which offers the same suite of services as the online help page. For our customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have speech impairments, we offer information through the FCC's TRS program.
- For those customers who believe the response from the preceding resources has been inadequate, our USPS Consumer Advocate offers a further venue. Customers can initiate a case by writing Office of the Consumer Advocate, 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, D.C. 20260.

Importantly, by relying on these considerable resources and directing all customer inquiries there, the Postal Service can recognize issues that need attention or respond to emerging trends. The data from our various conduits provide an overall, trackable picture of customer satisfaction or concerns and, when combined with the billions of daily data points from our processing operations, they are an essential tool in managing our network. Short circuiting this process would be a poor business practice.

To communicate with customers about our performance and the current state of operations, we provide a wide array of reporting and real-time updates. Specifically:

- Inaugurated in May 2023, anyone can access our current data on service performance by visiting <https://about.usps.com/what/performance/service-performance/external-service-measurement.htm>, to find the current metrics on specific ZIP Codes and providing District-level information for our market-dominant products.
- For individual customers interested in packages, we offer tracking and status update information at <https://tools.usps.com/go/TrackConfirmAction>, where they can see all of the available information.
- For individual customers interested in mail products, we offer a special service to track and anticipate mail currently being processed and destined for delivery with a daily update via email, the online dashboard, or the USPS Mobile app. Information about this service can be found at <https://www.usps.com/manage/informed-delivery.htm>.
- For customers who need real-time updates on the status of the network we offer service alerts for consumers, small businesses and business mailers about postal facility service disruptions caused by weather-related and other natural disasters, special events, or other changes impacting service. These can be found at <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/>.
- For business customers and major mailers, we offer a further set of services, available at <https://postalpro.usps.com/>.

It is important to note that these resources are offered universally. Information about performance or service alerts are publicly available, and any individual can sign up for services reporting on his or her individual mail. Except under exceptional circumstances, the Postal Service does not offer special reporting or information to any subset of customers that is not also available to any other customer. While we appreciate that some communities or customer segments would prefer special reporting or exclusive venues to have complaints resolved, the Postal Service must be mindful that we provide universal service to the American people as a whole.

In addition to the fairness of offering universal customer service, as you can now appreciate from our meetings and from the tours of the North Houston RPDC and the South Houston LPC, we have provided your staff, having customer service representatives on site to identify single pieces of mail or packages within these facilities would be logistically impossible. Searching for one package within a facility would require suspending operations, further delaying the important work our employees are doing of processing your constituents' mail and packages. I will note, however, that there are customer service representatives who work within the North Houston RPDC who are helping to respond to those customer inquiries that are submitted through the channels listed above. There is not public access to our processing plants so on-site customer contact is not feasible. It also would leave the false impression that any one specific location is relevant to progress or the location of mail or packages as it travels through the postal network.

In closing, I would like to note that Texas 2 District officials will continue to host quarterly briefings to provide your staff with an update on Postal Service operations in the Houston area. We welcome your congressional oversight role of the Postal Service, and senior Postal staff will be available to answer any questions at these briefings. Looking forward, we will send an invitation to our next congressional staff briefing when we identify a date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Pastre", with a stylized, flowing script.

Peter Pastre  
Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy