



# NTSB declines review of Holly crash



The Feb. 3, 1959, crash that killed Buddy Holly is shown in this Globe file photo. The National Transportation Safety Board on Monday declined to reopen the investigation.

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CLEAR LAKE | The National Transportation Safety Board has declined a request to review the February 1959 plane crash which killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson and pilot Roger Peterson.

L.J. Coon, a New England man and experienced pilot, petitioned the NTSB [asking it to take another look](#) at its findings.

The agency responded in a letter dated April 21 stating it could not find — and Coon's letter asking for reconsideration did not supply — any additional information that would be needed for the NTSB to reconsider the findings of the original investigation.

"While your letters imply facts by stating (It was reported), they do not contain the evidence

needed to substantiate the information you present as factual," states a letter signed by John DeLisi, director of the Office of Aviation Safety.

Coon contended there were issues involving weight and balance calculations, the rate of the aircraft's climb and descent, fuel gauge readings and whether a passenger-side rudder pedal was removed or not which the NTSB should investigate.

The NTSB's Office of the Managing Director said an initial response to Coon's petition would take [two months](#). Coon sent letters on Jan. 15, 2015, and Feb. 10, 2015, questioning the conclusions of the 1959 crash investigation.

On Sept. 23, 1959, the Civil Aeronautics Board [ruled the probable cause of the crash was pilot error](#). Weather, specifically snow, was listed as a secondary cause of the crash.

The NTSB was established in 1967, taking over the investigation of airline crashes.

In a February email to the Globe Gazette, Coon said he believed the NTSB would review the pilot's actions in the aircraft during the flight and realize "the heroic effort that took place in those 4.9 miles."

The plane was airborne for less than four minutes, traveling less than 5 miles north of the Mason City Municipal Airport before crashing into a Clear Lake farm field.

DeLisi's letter addresses several of Coon's assertions about the plane and pilot.

"Your letters contend that the weight and balance calculations were performed with the originally planned passengers. However, you do not provide new factual evidence to support your concern and therefore, have not met the basis for a reconsideration of the accident flight's weight and balance," the letter states.

Richardson replaced performer Waylon Jennings on the flight.

"Regarding your contentions about the accident pilot's flight experience, we note that the CAB report states that the pilot had 128 hours in Bonanza aircraft and 52 hours of dual instrument training; several different aircraft were used for the dual training."

The NTSB said there is no evidence to substantiate whether the pilot had flown this aircraft in instrument conditions before the Feb. 3, 1959, flight.

"You also offer your theories regarding the rudder pedal, magneto switches and gauge readings on the accident aircraft. However, you do not provide new factual information to support those theories."

No further action is planned.

Coon did not respond to an email from the Globe Gazette seeking comment on the NTSB's decision.

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