



*United States Senate Committee on*  
**Homeland Security &  
Governmental Affairs**

*U.S. Senator Gary Peters | Ranking Member*

# **USPS Oversight Update**

*A HSGAC Minority Staff Report*

## USPS OVERSIGHT UPDATE

**October 20, 2020**

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Senator Gary Peters, Ranking Member

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This update assesses concerning trends in the most recent United States Postal Service (USPS) service performance data provided to Congress. The analysis finds that widespread fluctuations in on-time mail delivery continue months after problems were first identified and that some parts of the country are facing increasing delays.

In August 2020, Senator Peters launched an investigation into operational changes to mail delivery directed by U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy in July 2020, one month after Mr. DeJoy took office. Senator Peters released a series of reports detailing the extent of the delays and the harmful impacts Postmaster General DeJoy's directives had on seniors, small business owners, and others who depend on the Postal Service for critical deliveries.<sup>1</sup> On October 9, 2020, Senator Peters released an oversight update assessing the Postal Service's recent efforts to address delivery delays.<sup>2</sup> This update finds that while the Postal Service has taken certain steps in response to congressional oversight and litigation to roll back prior changes directed by Postmaster General DeJoy and improve on-time mail delivery across the country, those steps have fallen short as on-time delivery continues to decline in several major cities across the U.S.

### **I. Since October, mail delays have improved slightly nationwide, but on-time delivery rates remain below levels prior to Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 changes.**

During the week of October 3 – 9, 2020 (the most recent for which data is available), the Postal Service delivered 86.2% of First-Class mail within the one-to-five-day timeframes specified in the USPS service standards.<sup>3</sup> While on-time delivery improved slightly over the past couple of weeks, it remains 4.9 percentage points below the on-time delivery rates prior to Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 directives. *See Figure 1.*

The Postal Service consistently delivered about 91% of First-Class Mail within the applicable timeframes prior to Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 directives.<sup>4</sup> On-time delivery plummeted starting in mid-July, and fell to 81.5% during the week of August 8–14, the lowest level seen all year.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Minority Staff Report, *Failure to Deliver: Harm Caused by U.S. Postmaster General DeJoy's Changes to Postal Service Mail Delivery* (Sept. 16, 2020); United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Minority Staff Report, *Interim Report on the Threat of Postmaster General DeJoy's Postal Service Delays* (Aug. 21, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Ranking Member Sen. Gary C. Peters, *USPS Oversight Update* (Oct. 9, 2020).

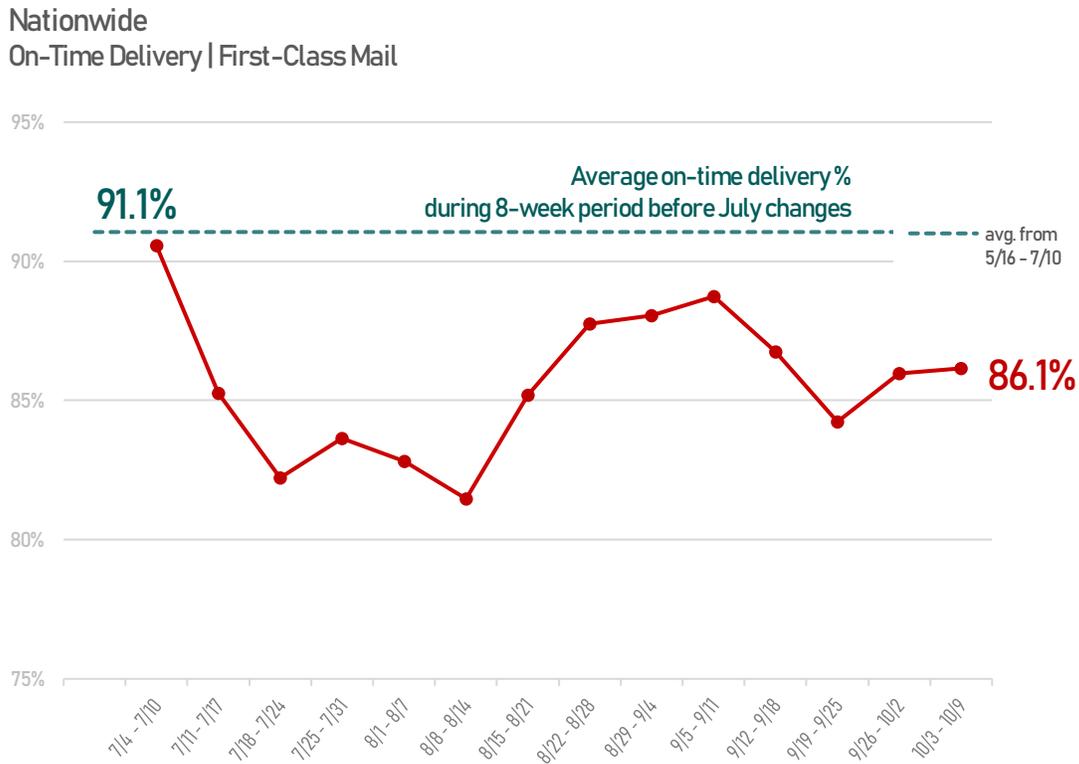
<sup>3</sup> Service standards for First-Class mail specify a delivery timeframe of one to five days, depending on the distance between the sender and the addressee. *See also* U.S. Postal Regulatory Commission, *Analysis of the Postal Service's FY 2019 Annual Performance Report and FY 2020 Performance Plan* (June 1, 2020). (<https://www.prc.gov/sites/default/files/reports/USPS%20Perf%20Rpt%20and%20Plan.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> During the 8-week period from May 16 – July 10, nationwide on-time delivery rates for First-Class Mail ranged from a low of 90.4% to a high of 92.3%. The average on-time delivery score during this 8-week period was 91.1%.

Figure 1

Service performance improved by the end of August, but has fluctuated in recent weeks and has failed to match previous on-time delivery levels.

While nearly all of the recent delays have extended delivery times by 1–3 days for First-Class Mail, a delay of even one day can have a significant impact on important mail, including medicine, bills, or election mail.<sup>5</sup>



Source: Staff analysis of weekly service performance data provided by USPS

- In each of the seven geographic Areas across the U.S., on-time delivery rates for the week of October 3 - 9 remained below the levels prior to the July changes.
- In **62** of the **67** Postal Districts, on-time delivery performance remains below the average levels during the 8-week period prior to Postmaster General DeJoy’s July directives.
- During the week of October 3 – 9, **54** of the **67** Postal Districts had on-time delivery rates below 90%. In six of those Districts, on-time performance was below 80%. See Figure 2.

<sup>5</sup> During the week of October 3 – 9, over 97% of First-Class Mail was delivered within three days of the target delivery timeframes. See U.S. Postal Service, Service Variance Report through week of October 3 – 9.

Figure 2

Districts with on-time delivery rates below 80%  
week of 10/3 – 10/9

District Name	First-Class Mail On-Time Delivery%
Detroit	70.9%
Capital	74.4%
Baltimore	74.5%
Mississippi	77.5%
Alabama	79.6%
Philadelphia Metro	79.7%

Currently available data does not provide clear answers regarding the extent to which election mail has specifically been impacted.

**II. Across Michigan, on-time delivery declined during the first week of October. In the Detroit District, delays have been increasing for several weeks.**

In the Detroit and Greater Michigan Postal Districts, mail delivery delays increased overall during the month of September, and continued to do so during the week of October 3 – 9. *See Figures 3 and 4.* Only 70.9% of First-Class Mail was delivered on time in the Detroit District – the worst performance of any District in the country for the most recent time period in which data is available. This is the fourth consecutive week that on-time delivery declined in the Detroit District, which has experienced a 12.2 percentage point drop since the week of September 5 – 11.

In the Greater Michigan District, on-time delivery has remained relatively stable in recent weeks. During the week of October 3 – 9, service performance declined by 0.5 percentage points from the previous week to 86.1% on-time delivery.

While on-time delivery rates in both Michigan Postal Districts have improved since the height of the delays in early-August, performance remains below the levels during June and early-July 2020 before Postmaster General DeJoy’s directives.<sup>6</sup> During the week of October 3 – 9, on-time delivery in the Detroit District (70.9%) was 13.6 percentage points below average levels prior to the changes (84.5%), and in the Greater Michigan District on-time performance (86.1%) remained 5.6 percentage points below prior on-time delivery levels (91.6%).

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<sup>6</sup> Following DeJoy’s July directives, on-time delivery in the Detroit District fell dramatically, reaching a low-point of only 61.0% in early-August. In the Greater Michigan District, the decline was less severe, with on-time delivery falling to 80.3%.

Figure 3

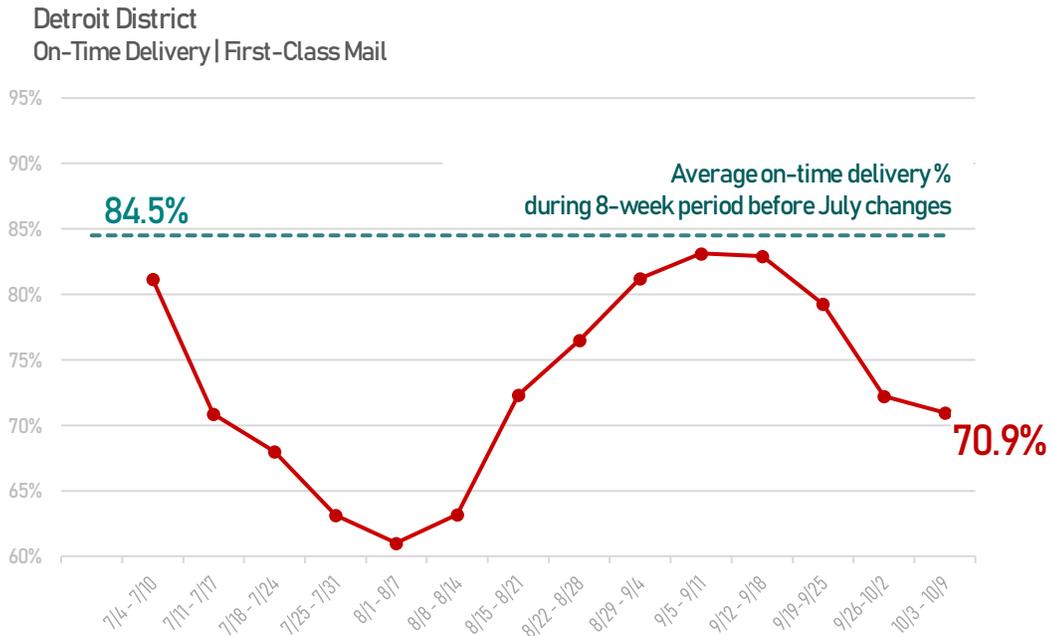
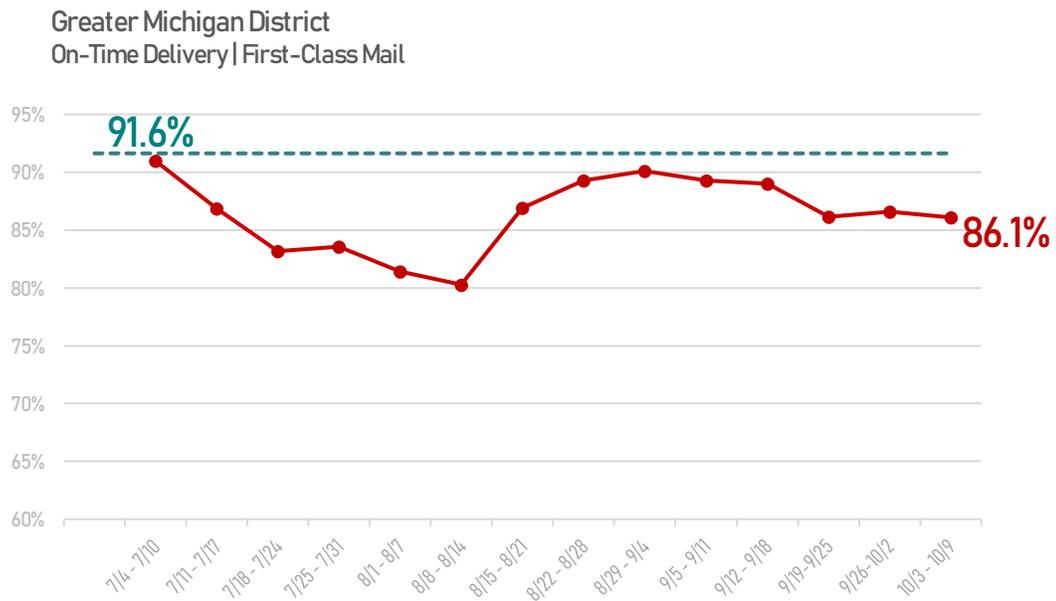


Figure 4



Source: Staff analysis of weekly service performance data provided by USPS

## CONCLUSION

While the Postal Service has made some improvements since congressional oversight and federal litigation against Postmaster General DeJoy's actions began, on-time delivery levels remain unacceptably low. Postmaster General DeJoy must also answer for the September decline and continuing fluctuations in First-Class Mail on-time delivery performance and take all necessary actions to restore service to target levels.