



February 9, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Cantwell and Cruz and Representatives Graves and Larsen:

On behalf of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – the business voice of the nation’s engineering industry – I am writing to outline our priorities for legislation to reauthorize Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) programs and funding this year. We applaud the commitment you have made to advancing the FAA bill before the current authorization expires to avoid disruption and address the many critical issues facing our world-class aviation system.

ACEC is focused on aviation and airport infrastructure policies that enhance safety, ensure environmental protection and remediation, facilitate economic development, and meet the growing needs of the traveling public.

Airport Infrastructure Investment

Our top priority is designing 21st century aviation infrastructure that supports the safe and reliable movement of people and goods. To that end, the reauthorization bill should include a substantial increase in authorized annual funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and an expansion of eligible uses. Funding for AIP has been relatively flat for nearly 20 years, despite significant unmet needs as identified in the FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems report. We strongly supported the airport funding included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, particularly the new terminal program, which will help airport advance critical infrastructure projects. However, the IJA grant funding is already oversubscribed and ought to be followed in the FAA reauthorization with a stable and growing AIP.

We also strongly support an expansion of AIP eligibility for terminal improvement projects, as undertaken in the IJA. With passenger travel returning to pre-pandemic levels, these projects are essential to relieving congestion, improving safety, and enhancing the passenger experience, all of which will promote economic growth in and around the airport facility.

ACEC also continues to call on Congress to lift the outdated cap on Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs). These local user fees are an essential component of funding and financing a wide array of projects. Many airports have fully leveraged their available financing options under the current cap; modernizing the PFC will provide an additional tool to meet their infrastructure needs.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Engineering firms utilize unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for a wide array of services, including surveying, construction site monitoring, facility inspections, and wetlands mapping. What once seemed futuristic just a few years ago is now commonplace. As these technologies continue to develop and their capabilities improve, it is essential that FAA continue to develop a comprehensive system for safely integrating UAS and advanced air mobility (AAM) aircraft into the national airspace.

Specifically, ACEC supports efforts to enable beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations, including a directive to complete a rulemaking by a date certain and guidance for commercial BVLOS waivers in the interim. The reauthorization should also provide FAA with the programmatic resources necessary to facilitate UAS and AAM integration.

Environmental Protection and Resilience

Engineering firms advise their airport clients through a wholistic planning process on methods for improving sustainability and environmental stewardship. Additional funding and guidance specifically for resilience planning would equip airports to pursue improvements to reduce emissions, install electrification networks, and bolster resilience against natural and manmade hazards.

ACEC also supports the establishment of a funding program for the research and development of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and the installation of SAF infrastructure at airports. To meet the demand for carbon reduction, airports and their aviation partners need additional resources to accommodate SAF production, transportation, blending, and storage.

Finally, Congress should assist airports in the cleanup and remediation of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). As you know, many airports face significant challenges in dealing with these chemicals, the disposal of fire-fighting foam and equipment, and the transition to alternatives. The FAA bill should provide funds to assist in this important environmental cleanup effort.

We look forward to working with you, your colleagues, and staff on these issues as the FAA reauthorization debate moves forward. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linda Bauer Darr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Bauer Darr
President & CEO