



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES

Aviation and Airport Investment

ISSUE

A key part of the infrastructure agenda in 2018 is the long-term reauthorization of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airport construction and related programs, which will bolster the U.S. economy by modernizing aviation infrastructure and providing long-term funding stability. **ACEC urges Congress to support an FAA reauthorization bill that boosts investment, promotes uniform procurement and auditing standards, and facilitates the use of unmanned aircraft systems.**

BACKGROUND

America's airports are powerful economic engines, generating more than \$1.1 trillion in annual activity and supporting more than 9.6 million jobs. Over the next five years, airports will require over \$20 billion annually to update aging facilities, relieve delays and congestion, and promote safety and security. Direct federal funding through the FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP) covers only a fraction of the total infrastructure projects required to upgrade and maintain our world-class aviation system.

Congress should build on the increased funding included in the FY'18 Omnibus appropriations bill for the AIP program by ensuring substantial multi-year growth in the reauthorization bill to address critical system needs. Congress also needs to lift the cap on Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) to give airports the tools to generate more local revenue for runways, taxiways, terminals, gates, and other projects that would increase capacity and improve the overall passenger experience. The \$4.50 cap on PFCs has not been adjusted in 18 years, and cost inflation has eroded the purchasing power by half.

Aviation programs and airport projects would also be improved through uniform procurement and contracting standards for engineering services. Confusing and costly local airport contracting practices often conflict with federal standards and present a barrier to firms seeking to compete. A Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) procurement process – an open, competitive system where firms compete on the basis of qualifications, past experience, and the expertise they bring to a project – should be in place for all airport capital projects funded through AIP or PFCs. In addition, contracts with engineering firms should be subject to federal cost accounting and audit standards, which will provide consistency with existing rules for surface transportation projects and reduce regulatory burdens, enhance competition and innovation, and save taxpayer money.

Lastly, the FAA reauthorization bill should advance the safe and efficient integration of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) into the national airspace. Engineering firms are using UAS for a wide array of services, including surveying, mapping, site monitoring, and inspections, among others. Utilizing UAS can often be done with less risk and more accuracy than traditional means, yielding significant efficiencies and savings.

KEY POINTS

More Investment – provide for steady increases in AIP funding in a multi-year program and lift the cap on PFCs to give airport authorities greater flexibility to meet local needs.

Regulatory Reform – adopt uniform rules for procuring and contracting engineering services on all airport projects.

Embrace Technology – give engineers more opportunities to use UAS to perform safe and proven operations beyond the limitations in current FAA regulations.

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