

June 9, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair
The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



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Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) would like to commend you for your leadership in introducing the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Like the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), ASCE considers passage of a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill a top legislative priority this year. We would like to thank you for your leadership in introducing this bipartisan legislation and urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to pass this bill in a timely manner.

As the professionals responsible for designing and operating the country's built environment, civil engineers recognize the importance of safe and reliably funded aviation infrastructure. Our aviation system allows people to travel to their destinations, facilitates the movement of goods, and plays a key role in the nation's economy. Unfortunately, ASCE'S 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure graded the nation's aviation infrastructure a "D+". The bipartisan reauthorization bill introduced by the House T&I Committee offers reliable support for programs that are vital for the safety and resilience of our system.

ASCE appreciates the strong support given to the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), which is a major source of infrastructure investment funding for airports. The \$20 billion included for AIP grants will help airports meet growing infrastructure needs. While the bill does not eliminate the federal cap on the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), which ASCE had recommended, we believe shoring up AIP funds is a positive step to protect infrastructure funding and improve the condition of our airports.

Across all sectors of infrastructure, ASCE supports sustainability and resilience projects. We are especially grateful for the provision in the bill that charges the FAA administrator to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to initiate an assessment on the resiliency of coastal airports. ASCE recognizes that another key element of resilience is cybersecurity, and we support the bill's inclusion of proposals on this subject, such as the establishment of a national airspace system cyber threat management process to protect the environment which provides air traffic service to more than 2.9 million passengers per day.

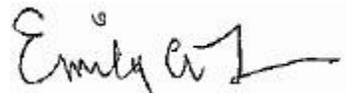
ASCE would like to commend the bill's emphasis on improving safety, particularly in light of the near misses that took place at the start of 2023. Notable proposals that have the potential to make a positive difference are the establishment of a Runway Safety Council, a study of runway incursions and surface incidents, and the development of performance metrics to assess the operation of safety-critical communication, navigation, and surveillance infrastructure. Safety is the watchword of the civil engineering profession, and we appreciate the provisions that aim to make air travel safer for passengers and system operators.

Commercial air service is as crucial to small, rural communities as it is to more populated ones. ASCE commends the provisions of the bill that address the air service needs of small communities, including authorized funds for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program and a proposed feasibility study of authorizing alternative modes of transportation to serve communities under the EAS program.

Finally, ASCE appreciates the bill's efforts to streamline project delivery at airports. The already strained aviation system is grappling with myriad challenges as the sector recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and streamlining certain processes can help crucial projects break ground more quickly. ASCE believes the goal should be to allow critical infrastructure projects to proceed in a timely manner, without putting the environment at risk. Proposals included in the bill—such as the use of a single document for final environmental impact statements, page limits on environmental impact statements, and the establishment of a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in comments on the environmental review process—are positive ways to expedite projects. These regulatory reforms may in turn lead to reduced costs and improved safety once projects are completed.

Again, thank you for your efforts to adhere to an aggressive timeline and advance your version of this important legislation. We urge you to work with your colleagues in the House and your counterparts in the Senate to swiftly approve this legislation in a bipartisan manner prior to September 30. Any short-term extensions would disrupt the entire aviation system and jeopardize the nation's economy. ASCE stands ready to assist you as you continue to work on this reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Emily A. Feenstra
Chief Policy and External Affairs Officer at ASCE