



February 9, 2009

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
253 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rockefeller:

As trade and individual membership associations representing virtually all of the aviation community, we are writing to stress the importance of passing a comprehensive, long-term reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as soon as practicable, recognizing the serious issues at stake. We urge Congress to complete the reauthorization process at the earliest possible time in order to expedite the modernization and expansion of our national air transportation system and foundation for future growth of the economy.

As you may know, the American economy is increasingly dependent upon the rapid transportation of products and people that aviation allows. As a result, aviation plays a major role in driving growth and investment across the country. With the current concerns about the stability and future of the U.S. economy, we feel it is important to emphasize the vital role that aviation plays in our economy:

- Representing 5.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product;
- Contributing over \$1.2 trillion in economic activity; and
- Providing 11 million jobs.

While our individual organizations represent a wide cross section of local, state and national interests, we are unified in recognizing the importance of advancing multi-year FAA reauthorization legislation, including the modernization of the air traffic control system normally referred to as the Next Generation Air Transportation System, or NextGen. The strength of our aviation system and the ability to meet future demand is dependent upon the federal government's success in expanding system capacity, upgrading existing technology and streamlining operations. Approval of these programs is also important to maintaining our international leadership in this area. A critical step in meeting these obligations is for Congress to act on a comprehensive, long-term bill that will help provide the programs and resources necessary.

Comprehensive FAA reauthorization legislation will address many vital national objectives, including:

Modernization of the Air Traffic Control System:

In a recent press release, FAA summarized the immediate need for system modernization: “The Next Generation Air Transportation System, or NextGen, is the transformation of the ground-based air traffic control system of today to a satellite-based system of the future. This transformation is essential in order to safely accommodate the number of people who fly in the US...New satellite-based technologies will significantly improve safety, capacity and efficiency on runways and in the nation’s skies while providing environmentally friendly procedures that will reduce fuel burn, carbon emissions and noise.” Completion of a comprehensive reauthorization of the FAA will help define modernization and provide the multi-year programs, direction and funding necessary to accelerate this critical transformation of our aviation system.

Emissions Reduction:

Global climate change, environmental issues and energy efficiency will undoubtedly be important focal points in the 111th Congress. During the 110th Congress, the House and Senate FAA Reauthorization bills established several environmental programs that will, among other things, define and achieve specific environmental goals and provide for continued research on the potential use of alternative aviation fuels. Completing this legislation and initiating these programs will contribute to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

While the aviation industry has made great strides over the past several decades in reducing its impact on the environment, we recognize that more needs to be accomplished if we are to expand capacity in the future. Environmental stewardship is an imperative. We are committed to working with Congress to develop reasonable and balanced policies that support the nation's twin objectives of promoting mobility while minimizing the industry's environmental footprint.

In the case of aviation, an effective way to reduce emissions is to continue the work mentioned above to implement a more efficient NextGen system based on satellite technology. The Government Accountability Office has cited FAA data showing that the full implementation of NextGen could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft by up to 12 percent by 2025. It is also important that the government invest in research for the alternative fuels to power the nation's airlines and general aviation.

Investment in Airport Infrastructure:

As you know, there are over 5,000 public use airports in this country - approximately 500 of these airports have commercial airline service. In addition to commercial airline service to large communities, general aviation and regional air service provide economic lifelines to thousands of communities across the country. Additional investment in airports and heliports of all sizes will undoubtedly provide benefits to cities and rural communities in all 50 states. In fact, for many communities, the local airport drives economic development in the area. Airports play a key role in facilitating business investment in communities which leads to job creation.

The FAA predicts more than 1 billion airline passengers by 2016, and more than 1.3 billion by 2025. Airport infrastructure improvements are not only necessary, but vital for ensuring that people and cargo continue to move safely and securely to both their domestic and international destinations. In addition, improvements that help enhance capacity and efficiency on the ground at airports will contribute to the critical upgrades to the air traffic control system that will flow from the implementation of Next Gen.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you to complete the FAA reauthorization process and ensure that our nation's aviation system is able to grow in a manner that is safe, secure and efficient.

Sincerely,

*Aerospace Industries Association
Aerospace States Association
Air Carrier Association of America
Air Transport Association
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
Airport Consultants Council
Airports Council International-North America
American Association of Airport Executives
Cargo Airline Association
Experimental Aircraft Association
General Aviation Manufacturers Association*

*Helicopter Association International
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
National Air Carrier Association
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
National Air Transportation Association
National Aircraft Resale Association
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of State Aviation Officials
National Business Aviation Association
Regional Airline Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce*