



DAVID A. RAYMOND
PRESIDENT & CEO

February 10, 2016

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation
2251 Rayburn
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Shuster and Chairman LoBiondo:

I am writing to express the views of ACEC – the voice of America’s engineering industry – on the *Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization Act* (AIRR Act).

First, we applaud you for increasing investments in our nation’s aviation infrastructure through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). America’s airports are powerful economic engines, generating more than \$1.1 trillion in annual activity. Unfortunately, funding through the AIP has not been increased in more than a decade. The modest growth included in the AIRR Act will mark a small step toward the necessary investments to update aging facilities, relieve congestion, and enhance safety.

We urge you to supplement the proposed increase in the AIP program by giving airport authorities the option to adjust the cap on Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) in order to finance needed improvement projects. Airports require more than \$15 billion annually in infrastructure upgrades to adequately handle the growing number of passengers and amount of freight cargo anticipated in the coming decade. The PFC is an essential tool for funding and financing these projects – a user fee collected and reinvested to serve travelers and local businesses that rely on airports for their livelihood. We strongly encourage the committee to include a PFC adjustment as the AIRR Act moves through the legislative process.

ACEC also supports an amendment to require a Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process for airports acquiring architectural, engineering, and design-related services on PFC-funded projects. QBS is an open, competitive process that ensures that public agencies receive the technical expertise, innovation, and experience necessary to maximize project quality and protect taxpayer dollars. QBS has been federal law for over 40 years, has been endorsed by the American Public Works Association (APWA), and adopted by the American Bar Association (ABA) as part of its model procurement code. QBS already applies to projects funded through the AIP program, and we respectfully request that you extend this well-established and time-tested procurement process to PFCs.

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We are pleased with the provisions in the AIRR Act aimed at safely and efficiently integrating unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) into the national airspace. Many engineering and design firms have embraced the use of UAS for a wide array of services, including surveying, mapping, site monitoring, and facility inspections, among many others. Utilizing UAS for these jobs can often be done with less risk and more accuracy than manned flights, with significant efficiencies and cost savings. The additional tools and flexibilities provided in the bill, particularly those aimed at streamlining a risk-based permitting process for proven applications and robust research and testing of newer technologies, can help our firms put these machines to good use in service to their clients and the public.

Finally, we will be closely monitoring the committee's ambitious proposal to remove air traffic control functions from the FAA and transfer them to an independent, not-for-profit corporation. A number of our member firms currently contract or subcontract on a wide array of engineering and other technical services on FAA air traffic control facilities and equipment. We are still reviewing the potential impact of transitioning these contracts and agreements to the new entity. A number of questions remain, including the process the entity will utilize for executing future agreements. Our foremost concerns will be ensuring stability and continuity through the transition, promoting the reliability of funds for projects going forward, and open and fair competition for technical services.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of the views of the engineering industry. We look forward to working with you on the AIRR Act as it advances through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



David A. Raymond
President & CEO

cc: Members of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee