

ENACT A NEW, LONG-TERM FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION AUTHORIZATION SUPPORTING CONTINUED AIR SERVICE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to enact a new, long-term Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization that supports airport development and air service for urban, suburban and rural communities upon expiration of the current law, *the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* (FAARA/P.L. 115-254), on September 30, 2023.

BACKGROUND:

County officials have tremendous public infrastructure responsibilities, including strengthening the nation's air transportation system. Annually, counties invest over \$5 billion in air transportation, directly supporting 34 percent of the nation's public airports and employing nearly 12,000 employees across the country.

In October 2018, lawmakers enacted the five-year FAARA, authorizing \$96.7 billion for the nation's airports from FY 2019 to FY 2023. With FAARA's expiration approaching later this year, Congress and the White House must now work together to produce a new authorization or extend the current law until a larger deal can be reached.

The reauthorization process allows Congress to address many aspects of FAA policy and funding, including important programs for counties:

- **The Airport Improvement Program (AIP)** provides federal grants to airports for airport development and planning, with a major advantage in that AIP funds capital projects without the financial burden of debt financing, although airports are required to provide a local match.
- **The Essential Air Service Program (EAS)** supports commercial air service to traditionally small and isolated communities by providing subsidies to carriers that offer service between EAS communities and major hub airports.

ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST OVER \$5 BILLION STRENGTHENING THE NATION'S AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

IN ADDITION TO SIGNIFICANT SURFACE TRANSPORTATION RESPONSIBILITIES, COUNTY OFFICIALS ALSO DIRECTLY SUPPORT 34 PERCENT OF AMERICA'S PUBLIC AIRPORTS.

THE FAA REAUTHORIZATION PROVIDES FUNDING FOR COUNTY-SUPPORTED AIRPORTS THAT BUILD ECONOMIES AND CONNECT OUR RESIDENTS TO THE WORLD AROUND US.

THE CURRENT FAA AUTHORIZATION WILL EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2023.

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- **Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP)** is a competitive grant program designed to help small communities address air service and airfare issues. Compared to the EAS program, SCASDP provides communities the opportunity to self-identify air service needs and propose solutions. Participation in the program is limited to those communities where the airport is not larger than a primary small hub, the service is insufficient and the air fares to the community are unreasonably high.
- **Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs)** are user fees, not a federally imposed tax. The money raised from PFCs are required to be spent on eligible airport-related projects. Unlike AIP funds, PFC funds may be used to service debt incurred to carry out projects.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- Counties support continued funding for the Airport Improvement Program and an increase in the federal share of airport development projects.
- Counties urge lawmakers to continue EAS subsidies to carriers serving small communities and to fully fund this critical program that serves as a lifeline to rural and isolated areas.
- Counties support continued, sufficient and guaranteed funding for the Small Community Airport Service Development Program which allows counties and other eligible entities to meaningfully engage in identifying challenges and proposing solutions to air service issues.
- Counties support the continued collection of PFCs, as well as giving airport sponsors the flexibility in determining how PFC funds may be spent. County officials urge lawmakers to raise the cap on PFCs and tie future increases to inflation.

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