



2008 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports sufficient and sustained funding for the Vision 100 Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (PL 108-176), which authorizes funding for federal aviation programs, with particular emphasis on the Air Improvement Program (AIP) and Essential Air Services Program (EAS).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

- Maintain and strengthen the AIP to allow airports to build capacity to meet the demands of future growth, including:
 - authorizing and providing adequate funding for the AIP program;
 - obligating funds annually from the trust fund without delay;
 - removing the trust fund from the federal unified budget; and,
 - using the trust fund for dedicated purposes only.
- Retain funding levels for the EAS program and continue federal subsidies, including the Small Community Air Service Development Program, for airlines serving small communities to ensure that service is not discontinued.
- Provide sufficient funding to ensure adequate security at both commercial and general aviation airports without directing funding away from other essential programs such as the AIP and the EAS Programs. Financial burdens related to security requirements should not be imposed on local and regional government entities.
- Ensure regional authority in aviation decision-making, including:
 - less federal supervision in instances where local governments are capable of operating and maintaining their airport facilities;
 - regional and local control of land use decisions pertaining to air and noise pollution control; and,
 - ability to work in conjunction with airport operators to impose and enforce rates and charges, as well as make decisions on revenue spending for airport development, capital financing and operations.

BACKGROUND

Aviation policy and related programs enhance mobility and support our country's regional transportation needs, serving as a catalyst for the efficient movement of goods and services and regional economic development. Regional, inter-jurisdictional governments have the capacity to plan and coordinate aviation activities with other land use and transportation factors. Aviation policy should capitalize on this capacity to better integrate aviation needs with other modes of transportation.

The following are three aviation programs that greatly impact regional travel and mobility:

- The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides grant funding to public agencies for the planning and development of public-use airports. Projects eligible for funding include runways, terminals and other enhancements designed to improve airport safety, capacity, security and environmental impacts. The AIP program is funded through the Aviation Trust Fund. Vision 100 authorized funding from this program at \$3.4 billion in FY 04 increasing to \$3.7 billion in FY 07.
- The Essential Air Service Program (EAS), which was developed in response to airline deregulation in 1978, guarantees small communities are served by certified air carriers and maintain a minimal level of service. Funding for this program subsidizes commuter airlines to serve approximately 140 rural communities across the country that otherwise would not receive any scheduled air service. Vision 100 authorized this program at a minimum of \$50 million. The program currently receives \$110 million.
- The Small Community Air Service Development Program, a pilot program created under the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR-21) and renewed under Vision 100, provides assistance to enhance air service to small communities. Communities participating in the program regularly experience inadequate air carrier service and unreasonably high airfares. The program is limited to 40 communities nationally with no more than four communities per state. There is a total of \$35 million authorized for this program annually, but recently it is only being funded at \$10 million as a set-aside in the AIP Program.

President Bush's FY09 budget would reduce aviation programs substantially – AIP by 22 percent, EAS by 55 percent, and Small Communities Air Services was zeroed out. The FY08 omnibus bill appropriated \$3.515 billion for AIP, \$110 million for EAS, and \$10 million for Small Community Air Service Development Program.