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General Aviation Airport Coalition

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May 19, 2011

The Honorable John Mica
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Petri
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Aviation
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick Rahall
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Costello
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Aviation
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Mica and Petri and Representatives Rahall and Costello:

As you prepare to conference with the Senate on H.R. 658, the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act, the General Aviation Airport Coalition (GAAC) seeks your assistance in maintaining the federal government's historic commitment to general aviation. Specifically, GAAC supports a four-year reauthorization bill that provides at least \$8.1 billion for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and maintains the 95/5 cost share as proposed by the Senate in S. 223. Additionally, GAAC requests your support for Section 137 of the House-passed bill to provide protections to GA Airports who have previously entered into a Through-The-Fence (TTF) agreement. Finally, GAAC supports efforts to ensure that general aviation interests are considered and representatives are involved in the development of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen).

General aviation airports are the backbone of our country's aviation system, comprising 90.2% of our nation's airports. In addition, the general aviation industry is an integral part of the U.S. economy - creating jobs, generating revenue, attracting business and industry, providing a transportation lifeline to communities across the country, helping businesses succeed, and supporting people and communities in times of crisis. General aviation's overall economic output in the U.S. is estimated at \$150 billion annually, supporting more than 1.2 million jobs.

Like many sectors of the economy, GA airports are struggling to remain operational in the current economic climate. GA airports have experienced sharp decreases in municipal support, while fuel prices continue to rise. GA airports receive the majority of their federal assistance through the FAA's AIP, which helps to offset the cost of vital airport improvement projects, such as runway resurfacing and facility safety enhancements. Now, more than ever, GA airports need the federal government's help to maintain its funding commitments and provide \$8.1 billion for AIP funding for the next four years and continue the 95/5 cost share.

Additionally, GAAC supports Section 137 of the House-passed bill concerning TTF agreements. The future of TTF agreements is currently under review by the FAA. In the absence of a final ruling on the issue, GAAC believes a general aviation airport should not be considered in violation of a federal grant assurance solely because the sponsor has an existing TTF agreement. Inclusion of Section 137 of the House-passed language in the final FAA Reauthorization bill is essential to hold harmless those airports with existing TTF agreements and not subject them to rescission of AIP funding.

Finally, reducing air traffic congestion and improving air safety by equipping general aviation aircraft with NextGen technologies is a priority shared by GAAC, Congress, and the Administration. Given the unique role that GA airports have in the aviation industry, it is imperative that GA airports be involved in any future decision making regarding NextGen. Therefore, GAAC supports inclusion of language in the final FAA reauthorization bill that requires GA airport industry involvement with the development of the NextGen plan.

Thank you for your consideration of these priority requests.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Imo
Executive Director
General Aviation Airport Coalition