

June 13, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair
The Honorable Ted Cruz, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) would like to commend you for your leadership in introducing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2023. Like the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, ASCE considers passage of a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill a top legislative priority this year. We would like to thank you for your leadership in introducing this bipartisan legislation and urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to pass this bill in a timely manner.

As the professionals responsible for designing and operating the country's built environment, civil engineers recognize the importance of safe and reliably funded aviation infrastructure. Our aviation system allows people to travel to their destinations, facilitates the movement of goods, and plays a key role in the nation's economy. Unfortunately, ASCE'S 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure graded the nation's aviation infrastructure a "D+". The bipartisan reauthorization bill introduced by the Senate Commerce Committee offers reliable support for programs that are vital for the safety, growth, and resilience of our system.

ASCE appreciates the strong support given to the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), which is a major source of infrastructure investment funding for airports. The \$20 billion included for AIP grants will help airports meet growing infrastructure needs. While the bill does not eliminate the federal cap on the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), which ASCE had recommended, we believe shoring up AIP funds is a positive step to protect infrastructure funding and improve the condition of our airports.

Across all sectors of infrastructure, ASCE supports sustainability and resilience projects. We are especially grateful for the provision in the bill that charges the FAA administrator to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to identify best practices for improving the resiliency of airports in coastal or flood-prone areas. ASCE recognizes that another key element of resilience is cybersecurity, and we support the bill's proposal for a review on the inclusion of aircraft cybersecurity into the strategic framework for aviation security.

ASCE would like to commend the bill's emphasis on improving safety, particularly in light of the near misses that took place at the start of 2023. Notable proposals include a study with the Bureau of

Transportation Statistics on monitoring ground source data, a pilot program focused on air traffic flow management technology, and a study of runway safety incidents to identify technologies that may prevent or reduce the risk of such incidents. Safety is the watchword of the civil engineering profession, and we appreciate the provisions that aim to make air travel safer for passengers and system operators.

Commercial air service is as crucial to small, rural communities as it is to more populated ones. ASCE commends the provisions of the bill that address the air service needs of small communities, including authorized funds for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program and measures to ensure air carriers continue to provide basic essential air service to eligible places.

Civil engineers stand at the forefront of innovation, and ASCE appreciates the bill's emphasis on this subject. In particular, we commend the measures to establish an Airspace Innovation Office, a NextGen Accountability Task Force, and a pilot program to evaluate technologies that detect and locate disrupting sources of interference to the GPS Standard Positioning Service.

Finally, ASCE appreciates the bill's efforts to facilitate project delivery at airports. The already strained aviation system is grappling with myriad challenges as the sector recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and streamlining certain processes can help crucial projects break ground more quickly. ASCE believes the goal should be to allow critical infrastructure projects to proceed in a timely manner, without putting the environment at risk. Proposals included in the bill—such as pilot programs focused on advanced construction methods and integrated project delivery, a general aviation public-private partnership program, and the provision of technical assistance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents—are positive ways to help projects break ground. These provisions may in turn lead to reduced costs and improved safety once projects are completed.

Again, thank you for your efforts to adhere to an aggressive timeline and advance your version of this important legislation. We urge you to work with your colleagues in the Senate and your counterparts in the House of Representatives to swiftly approve this legislation in a bipartisan manner prior to September 30. Any short-term extensions would disrupt the entire aviation system and jeopardize the nation's economy. ASCE stands ready to assist you as you continue to work on this reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas W. Smith III". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line underneath.

Thomas W. Smith III, NAC, ENV SP, CAE, F.ASCE
Executive Director