

American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE)/ U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) Contract Tower 2016 FAA Reauthorization and FY '17 Appropriations Recommendations

FAA Contract Tower Background – *The Government/Industry Partnership Dedicated to Air Traffic Safety*

- The FAA Contract Tower Program (FCT) enjoys strong bipartisan and bicameral support in Congress in recognition of the enhanced safety, improved air traffic control services, and significant FAA cost savings these control towers provide the agency and taxpayers. These benefits have been validated repeatedly by the Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General. Currently, 253 airports in 46 states participate in the program (237 in the fully funded program and 16 in the cost-share program).
- To illustrate the cost-effectiveness of the program to taxpayers, according to FAA statistics, the towers in the FCT Program handle approximately **28 percent** of all U.S. tower operations, but account for just **14 percent** of FAA's overall budget allotted to air traffic control tower operations.
- As a result of this 33-year highly successful government/industry partnership, the FCT Program: (1) enhances aviation safety at airports that otherwise would not have a tower; (2) provides significant cost savings to FAA and taxpayers; (3) plays a key role in connecting smaller airports and rural communities with the national air transportation system; (4) helps smaller airports retain and develop commercial air service and general aviation; (5) promotes economic development and creates jobs locally; (6) provides significant support for military readiness/training and national security operations (47 percent of all military operations at civilian airports in the U.S. occur at FAA contract towers), and (7) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users (pilots, airlines, FBOs, flight schools and corporate flight departments).
- The vast majority of federal contract air traffic controllers are former FAA or military controllers. In addition, approximately 70 percent of all contract controllers are veterans.
- All federal contract controllers are FAA-certified air traffic controllers who meet the identical training and operating standards as FAA-employed controllers. FAA manages and oversees all aspects of the FCT Program, including operating procedures, staffing plans, certification and medical tests of contract controllers, security and facility evaluations.
- Federal contract towers operate together with FAA-staffed facilities throughout the country as part of a unified national air traffic control system.
- Without a federal program that provides necessary funding, sets safety and training standards, certifies operations and monitors all aspects of contract tower facilities, many of these towers would be forced to close.

For further information or questions, please contact Spencer Dickerson of AAAE/USCTA at 703/824-0500, ext. 130 or sdickerson@aaae.org

AAAE/USCTA LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE 2015 FAA REAUTHORIZATION LEGISLATION AND FY '16 APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FAA CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

FAA Reauthorization Recommendations

FAA is working to revise the benefit/cost criteria for the contract tower program in a manner that could close some contract towers and/or unfairly shift tower staffing costs to the vast majority of airports with contract towers. AAAE/USCTA's reauthorization recommendations, which the airport industry believes will remove the uncertainty that has been hanging over contract towers the past few years and provide stability to airports, include:

- *Except for cost-share towers, eliminate the annual benefit/cost (b/c) analysis unless an airport's annual traffic drops by more than 25 percent annually or by more than 60 percent over a three year period;*
- *Prohibit FAA from adding non-site specific/indirect costs to b/c's (i.e. airways facilities costs, depreciation, etc.);*
- *Ensure that airports have an adequate opportunity to respond to an unfavorable cost-benefit analysis;*
- *Consistent with past FAA practice, automatically add 10 percent points to the benefit/cost analysis to capture non-quantifiable benefits of a control tower, and*
- *Remove the \$2 million cap on AIP eligibility for contract tower construction to be consistent with other AIP-eligible projects.*

Additionally, AAAE/USCTA recommends that the contract tower program is protected **if** Congress moves forward with establishing a potential non-profit ATC corporation to operate the air traffic control system. Specifically, we recommend Congress include the following language:

The ATC Corporation is prohibited from closing any tower participating in the FAA contract tower program (as established under § 47124) at the time of enactment unless approved by the public airport operator at the impacted tower facility.

Hill Request – Please request House and Senate offices to support the AAAE/USCTA contract tower legislative proposals in the House (H.R. 4441) and Senate (S. 2568) FAA reauthorization bills as listed above.

FY '17 Appropriations Recommendation

As Congress continues work on the Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration FY 2017 appropriations bill, the airport industry urges Congress to include the following statutory bill language under the FAA “Operations” section that would provide dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program:

Provided further, that of the funds appropriated under this heading, not less than \$159 million shall be for the fully funded and cost-share towers in the contract tower program.

Events of the past couple of years have made it abundantly clear that the FAA Contract Tower Program enjoys strong bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. As such, the airport industry requests that Congress include dedicated and full funding for the program in FY 2017 and extend the bill language that was adopted in the FY 2015 and 2016 spending bills.

Hill Request – Please encourage congressional officials to support \$159 million in statutory bill language for the contract tower program in the House and Senate FY 2017 DOT/FAA appropriations bill.