

Congresswoman Annie Kuster (NH-02)

*Submitted Testimony for the Record
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee*

Member Day

April 14, 2023

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

I want to begin by thanking you for holding today's Member Day. I appreciate this opportunity to present the priorities of New Hampshire's 2nd District. My statement today focuses on priorities for the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act, which is set to expire later this year.

Essential Air Service

Rural and small communities depend on commercial air service out of small, local airports like the Lebanon Municipal Airport in my district in New Hampshire. This airport provides connections to Boston Logan and New York City via White Plains, enabling Granite Staters to travel for business or pleasure and encouraging tourism to stimulate our local economy. However, service from this airport would not be possible without the Essential Air Service (EAS) program which subsidizes these flights that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

EAS is a vital safety net to connect communities to over 170 airports in 36 states and ensure that they maintain access to a minimum level of commercial air service. Without this program, many of these communities would lack access to commercial air service. I ask that the Committee continue its record of support for the Essential Air Service program and extend this program in a forthcoming FAA Reauthorization bill.

Solar-Powered Lighting Systems

As this Committee works to sustain our nation's airports, I ask that you also consider opportunities to integrate new innovative technologies to provide airports cost-savings and strengthen their resiliency. Currently, the majority of publicly-owned airport across the country use conventional hardwired lighting systems connected to the power grid for lighting. However, major airports such as Orlando, LAX, JFK, and O'Hare have purchased and installed solar-powered airfield lighting systems that are more energy-efficient, cost-effective, and can withstand power outages, all while providing equivalent performance.

Despite their demonstrated success, solar-powered lighting systems have yet to receive full approval by the FAA making them ineligible for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding and cost-prohibitive to many smaller airports.

I ask that the Committee request that the FAA produce an engineering brief describing the acceptable use of permanent solar powered lighting systems for airports across the country. This would provide needed guidance for airport authorities to evaluate these systems and reap the same benefits afforded to major airports.

5G Deployment

As a co-chair of the bipartisan 5G and Beyond Caucus, I am committed to ensuring that next-generation, wireless communication technology can be deployed nation-wide. Expanding access to wireless services will allow consumers in urban and rural communities to connect to faster networks and promote the innovation of future technologies. Most importantly, these networks will help to close the digital divide by connecting to hard-to-reach areas, like those that exist across New Hampshire.

As 5G deployment begins to accelerate, the FAA has raised concerns about the potential for networks near airports to interfere with critical safety equipment on aircrafts. I remain committed to the safety of my constituents and to ensuring that 5G can be deployed safely to all communities. I commend the industry for engaging in voluntary agreements with the FAA to ensure that the deployment of 5G technologies can continue without disruption to our aviation system. It is critical that the Committee ensures the FAA is empowered to develop future agreements as additional companies look to deploy 5G networks. I also ask that the Committee works to support airlines to upgrade equipment to avoid future interference.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of the priorities of New Hampshire's 2nd Congressional District. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that small, rural communities remain a focus in the development of the next FAA Reauthorization legislation.