



ALLEGHENY COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY
PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
ALLEGHENY COUNTY AIRPORT

July 17, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan,

I am writing to express my support for H.R. 2997, the 21st Century AIRR Act and would ask for your support regarding full U.S. House of Representatives passage. As owner and operator of both Pittsburgh International Airport and Allegheny County Airport, the Allegheny County Airport Authority has a vested interest in supporting reform-minded programs and initiatives. ATC modernization is one component of the bill that offers reform, upgrades, and predictable funding to our system. The anticipated benefits extend to airports, carriers and passengers.

I, of course, also support reforming the outdated Passenger Facility Charge in order to invest much needed funds in our airport infrastructure. While PFC reform is not part of this House bill, it should not overshadow the long overdue upgrades to our ATC system. ATC reform is a good first step and would help reduce flight delays, enable access to modern technology, reduce fuel consumption, and, by allowing overcrowded airports to more quickly turn flights, add capacity.

As written, a nonprofit, independent board designed to govern this system is an approach that can rectify the important issue of inadequate funding and aging technology. With funding not tied to the burden of governmental gridlock year after year, the U.S. Air Traffic Control system will quickly become more stable and will realize enhanced efficiencies. The bill also represents a collaborative effort to have a diverse group of aviation professionals that would make up the corporatized board, of which airports would have a representative seat.

As an independent entity, this would allow for a predictable stream of funding from a user-based system free of political interference with no burden to the general taxpayer. The first step would be to invest in new GPS technology, a system that the FAA has been unable to effectively implement. This change will allow the FAA to focus on what it does best – regulating safety.



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The good news is that we know this nonprofit system works. Canada, Australia and many other developed nations have already taken this step with success. This country helped to pioneer the commercial aviation system, but unfortunately we are being left behind with old technology and a system that is stressed and rife with delays.

ATC reform of course is not a cure-all. Airline consolidation has left fewer airlines pushing more and more passengers through fewer gateway airports. Outdated infrastructure constrains airports and passenger flow, costing time and money. Despite these other needs, ATC reform is a good first step.

As an airport we have been part of the economic transformation of our region by gaining an 80 percent increase in nonstop destinations along with adding eight new carriers in the last 2½ years. The economy of our region depends on a thriving and innovative aviation industry. ATC modernization complements that and offers a path forward to other aviation reforms.

It is for these reasons and the continued safe growth of the aviation industry that I ask for support of these reforms.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best,

Christina Cassotis
Chief Executive Officer