

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
FAA Reauthorization Member Day
April 18, 2023
Testimony

I want to begin by thanking Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen for convening this hearing and for welcoming member testimony as they craft this important legislation, the 2023 FAA Reauthorization bill.

I am proud to represent the 17th district of Illinois. My district is home to four airports, including one contract tower and one of the fastest growing cargo airports in the country.

Chicago Rockford International Airport is home to 8,000 jobs and contributes \$4.7 billion to the economy in 2020. Central Illinois Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal is home to more than 1,300 jobs. Quad Cities International Airport is home to 1,389 jobs in 2017. Peoria International Airport is home to 26 direct employees and many contractors. Combined, these four airports support over 10,600 jobs and contribute billions of dollars to the economy.

I would like to highlight some general priorities. First, I would like to express support for the Voluntary Airport Low Emissions Program (VALE) and Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) and Infrastructure Pilot Program programs. The VALE program assists airports to meet the air quality goals set under the Clean Air Act. The ZEV and Infrastructure Pilot program improves airport air quality and facilitates use of zero emissions technologies at airports.

Second, I would like to express support for the expanded availability of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) as well as assistance for airports to invest in the infrastructure needed to support the broader adaption and use of SAF.

Third, my district is home to one of the six FAA contract towers in Illinois. This program ensures airport and aircraft users in my district receive critical air traffic control services which keep the traveling public safe. In recent weeks and months, there have been several “near miss” incidents throughout the country. These incidents show how important our air traffic controllers are to the safety of the American aviation system. I would like to express robust support for the Contract Tower Program. This program helps support airports throughout the country – big and small – as well as safeguarding our aviation system and maintaining the stellar safety record the United States enjoys.

Relatedly, I would like to express support for the continued development of air traffic controllers at airports throughout the country. The shortage of these highly skilled men and women challenges our aviation system every day. On average, air traffic control staffing is at 81% of full capacity. As a result, FAA has called for airlines to reduce their summer flight schedules in order to bring flight numbers down to a number FAA can support with the current numbers of air traffic controllers. I think we can all agree that a robust air traffic control program with full staffing is imperative for the continued safety and operation of the American aviation system.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to testify on these important issues.