

FAA Reauthorization Note

The nation's and the world's economy are underpinned by the mobility provided by air transportation. That is particularly true for the mid-Atlantic region, where our members, their companies and the very health of our economy are dependent upon air transportation.

The demand on our aviation infrastructure is expected to double by 2015 and to quadruple by 2025.

The nation's air traffic control system is largely based on 1950s technologies. The system cannot be scaled up any more to meet the expanding demands of the nation's business and leisure needs. Therefore, the nation must either fund the progressive introduction of a 21st century air traffic control system, or face increasing travel delays to the detriment of our economy and quality of life.

Congress currently is working on a six-year funding bill for the Federal Aviation Administration. The bill is referred to as "FAA Reauthorization" and is equivalent to the six-year surface transportation funding bills.

The issue is clouded by two factors:

1. Party politics: The Republican Administration has proposed a Reauthorization Bill that seeks to attune the funding system to market demand through the introduction of user fees and dramatically increased fuel taxes. The proposed funding changes also would change and/or reduce Congressional oversight. The Democratic Congress considers the Administration Bill "dead on arrival." The House and Senate Committees are producing their own separate bills, both of which are expected to amend rather than change the current funding system and sustain the current level of Congressional oversight.
2. Within the aviation community, business and general aviation agree on the need for a new air traffic control system and expanded airport capacity, but bitterly disagree on the method of funding.

Inevitably, the issue is clouded by secondary issues and special concerns. For the Washington area, these likely will include Congressional efforts to change the Perimeter Rule and the High Density Rule governing the use of Reagan National Airport.

The provision of adequate infrastructure to support the nation's economy is too important an issue to be left to squabbling elements within the air transport industry. Consequently, business and user interests across the nation are mobilizing to voice support for an FAA Reauthorization Bill that:

- Provides adequate funding for air traffic control and airport capacity improvements.
- Is fair to all parties – travelers, shippers, airports, general aviation, and the airlines.
- Requires decisive action to build a 21st century air traffic control system and expand airport capacity.