

U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION

N E W S L E T T E R

FAA Federal Contract Tower Program

“The Government/Industry Partnership Dedicated to Air Traffic Safety”

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HOUSE, SENATE COMMITTEES WORK TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES IN FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILLS

The House on April 1 passed its version of FAA reauthorization. Specific provisions in the bill that affect FAA Contract Towers are:

- DOT is required to extend the contract tower program to FAA-staffed low activity VFR towers, if requested by a qualified entity (as determined by the DOT secretary), a state, or a subdivision of the state.
- A local airport has a grace period of 18 months before paying its share of a new cost-share tower.
- FAA may use unspent cost-share tower funds for fully funded contract towers, if needed.
- The bill caps the cost-share payment by a local airport to 20 percent for FAR Part 139 airports with annual passenger enplanements of fewer than 50,000 (i.e. If a benefit/cost ratio for a contract tower is .75 at a qualifying airport, FAA would pay 80 percent of the tower operating costs and the local airport would pay 20 percent.) This 20 percent cap sunsets Sept. 30, 2014.
- The cost-share program is authorized at \$8.5 million annually.
- The federal share in a contract tower construction program is increased from \$1.5 million to \$2 million.
- Regular FAA safety audits of contract towers are required.

The Senate on Feb. 17 approved its version of the FAA reauthorization bill with the following provisions for FAA Contract Towers:

- A local airport has a grace period of 18 months before paying its share of a new cost-share tower.
- FAA may use unspent cost-share tower funds for fully funded contract towers, if needed.
- The bill caps the payment by a local airport to a maximum of 20 percent for all-cost-share contract

towers, including general aviation airports with cost-share towers.

- The cost-share program is authorized at \$9.5 million for fiscal year 2010 and \$10 million for fiscal year 2011.
- The federal share in a contract tower construction program is increased from \$1.5 million to \$2 million.
- Regular FAA safety audits of contract towers are required.

The Senate Commerce and House Transportation and Infrastructure committees are now working to iron out the differences in the two bills. Following that step, the compromise version will be sent to both chambers for passage.

DOT IG LAUNCHES AUDIT OF FAA CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

DOT’s Inspector General in April announced that the office would begin an audit of FAA’s Contract Tower Program “to evaluate whether the program continues to have cost effectiveness, safety benefits, and overall value to users.”

The IG noted, “From 1998 to 2003, our office conducted audits evaluating the contract tower program. We found that the program successfully provided safe, low-cost air traffic services to users and that the quality of those services was comparable to FAA-operated towers.”

The House Committee on Appropriations, in its report accompanying its fiscal year 2011 DOT bill, also noted that the FAA Contract Tower Program is cost effective and performs an important safety function. “However, with a commitment to continue federal funding, the committee noted the need for another re-

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view,” the IG explained. The audit, which began in April, will include site visits to air traffic organization regional service centers and low-activity contract and FAA towers, the IG said.

AAAE/USCTA RECOMMEND REGULATORY RELIEF FOR TOWERS IN FAA CONTRACT PROGRAM

The Obama Administration invited industry to make recommendations on regulatory relief possibilities. In response, AAAE/USCTA sent the following letter to Neil Eisner, DOT assistant general counsel for regulation and enforcement, regarding the benefit/cost program for FAA Contract Towers:

“AAAE/USCTA recommends that FAA discontinue the process of conducting benefit/cost (B/C) analyses on fully-funded FAA contract towers to be consistent with FAA’s policy of not performing B/C analyses on FAA-staffed VFR towers. A B/C analysis would be triggered if an airport experiences a 50 percent or greater decline in annual air traffic operations for two consecutive years. Also, for the contract tower cost-share program, AAAE/USCTA recommends that Congress provide additional time (up to two years) for airports that fall below 1.0 for the first time to adequately budget for local cost-share funds.

Background — FAA conducts Benefit/Cost Analyses (B/C) using the methodology, data inputs and algorithms outlined in FAA Report APO 90-7, “Establishment and Discontinuance Criteria for Air Traffic Control Towers” for all Air Traffic Control Tower locations operated under the FAA Contract Tower Program. Application of the APO 90-7 criteria includes the use of existing and forecast airport operations, scheduled commercial air service aircraft types and based aircraft data among other inputs to determine the “benefit” side of the equation in which accident prevention and flight efficiencies are quantified.

The “cost” side of the B/C equation is determined by the contractor’s cost for operating the tower. The resultant B/C is the net present value of the cumulative benefits divided by the discounted operating cost spread out over 15 years. If the B/C is determined to be equal to or greater than 1.0, the tower is fully funded by FAA for the next two years. However, if the B/C is calculated at less than 1.0, the airport operator is advised that, while the tower can remain operational under the program, the sponsor is required to pay a pro rata share of the operational costs. This congressionally authorized “cost-share” program has been

funded by Congress on an annual basis to provide a safety net for airports desiring to maintain their controlled airspace and which otherwise would face closure due to the failure to meet the 1.0 B/C threshold.

To the best of our knowledge, the FAA Contract Tower Program is the only ATC safety-related operational program at FAA that is subject to regular B/C analysis. For instance, FAA does not perform B/C analyses on FAA-staffed Visual Flight Rule (VFR) towers, even though several of these facilities have fewer air traffic operations than FAA contract towers. Furthermore, as a recurring activity, the preparation, calculation and dissemination of the B/C ratio for each of the airport sites included in the program require extensive utilization of FAA staff time and local airport resources. Since at least 93 percent of the contract tower facilities are perennially above 1.0, the need to recalculate all 246 airports’ B/C is a questionable use of FAA staff resources when compared to the heavy FAA staff workload the B/C process requires.

Finally, many of the smaller airports that enter the cost-share program for the first time run deficit operating budgets and would have a very difficult time budgeting for local cost-share funds on short notice. Providing for additional time before the cost-share

U. S. C O N T R A C T T O W E R A S S O C I A T I O N

N E W S L E T T E R

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program becomes effective would give these smaller airports more time to budget long-term for their local cost-share funds.

Apply discontinuance benefit/cost criteria, not establishment criteria, to operating non-federal towers to determine the B/C ratio for inclusion in the FAA Contract Tower Program.

Background — FAA currently runs “discontinuance” criteria on current FAA contract towers, but runs “establishment” criteria on airports with non-federal towers seeking to enter the FAA Contract Tower Program. Discontinuance criteria, which puts a higher burden on FAA to justify closure, should be run on both FAA contract towers and non-federal towers. Permitting non-federal towers to be considered under the “discontinuance” criteria will enhance an airport’s opportunity to be eligible for the FAA Contract Tower Program, which is justified, given that the tower is already established, in addition to increasing overall aviation safety by adding additional smaller airports to the program.

SIXTEEN AIRPORTS PARTICIPATE IN CONTRACT TOWER COST-SHARING PROGRAM

Sixteen facilities were participating in FAA’s contract tower cost-sharing program as of June 1, 2011.

They are: Rogers Municipal (Ark.), Springdale (Ark.), Williamson County (Ill.), Bloomington (Ind.), Muncie/Delaware County (Ind.), Garden City (Kan.), Jackson (Mich.), Jefferson City (Mo.), Joplin Regional (Mo.), Central Nebraska/Grand Island (Neb.), Lea County/Hobbs (N.M.), Ardmore Municipal (Okla.), Williamsport/Lycoming Co. (Pa.), Fort Worth-Spinks (Texas), Grand Prairie (Texas) and Walla Walla Regional (Wash.).

DECLINE OF AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS AT CONTRACT TOWERS SLOWS TO 1.8 PERCENT IN 2010

By Dave Byers
Quadrex Aviation, LLC

Data from the FAA’s Air Traffic Activity Data System (ATADS) indicates that aircraft operations among the 246 federal contract tower (FCT) locations dropped only 1.8 percent overall between 2009-2010.

The decline is much less than the previous period, 2008-2009 when traffic decreased 8.9 percent.

For many airports, local operations (aircraft staying

in the local traffic pattern) represented the largest decline among the various operations classifications, averaging 4.8 percent less than 2009. In 2010, FAA Contract Towers handled nearly 14 million operations, 27 percent of all aircraft operations at airports with air traffic control towers.

Phoenix/Williams Gateway replaced Chandler Municipal Airport as the busiest FCT in the program with 177,874 total annual operations.

Two new air traffic control tower facilities were opened and added to the FCT program in 2010. Ocala (Fla.) International opened in May 2010. Almost simultaneously, Northwest Florida Beaches International opened as a replacement airport for Panama City International.

The entire report is available on the USCTA website at www.contracttower.org.

KISSIMMEE GATEWAY TOWER HONORED AT RVA ATC MANAGER’S CONFERENCE

Kissimmee (Fla.) Gateway Airport announced that its FAA Contract Tower has won the Air Traffic Control Contract Tower of the Year award.

Glenn Huckeba, air traffic manager for Kissimmee Gateway, accepted the award on behalf of the airport at the RVA Air Traffic Controllers Manager’s Conference. The award is given to an airport’s contract tower for providing high quality air traffic services and for its commitment to the local community through public service.

“Our contract tower staff gives tours to local public schools and civic organizations, providing an opportunity for our community to learn about general aviation,” said Terry Lloyd, A.A.E., director of aviation.

NOTAM DESIGNATES MODESTO CITY-COUNTY FACILITY AS A ‘GATEWAY’ AIRPORT

TSA on April 20-21 employed the concept “gateway airport” for Modesto (Calif.) City-County Airport when issuing a NOTAM concerning the arrival of President Obama to San Francisco.

It is believed to be the first time the “gateway airport” concept has been used. The NOTAM included the language, “A Gateway airport has been created at Modesto City-County Airport (KMOD) by TSA to accommodate general aviation aircraft arriving into San Francisco International Airport and Metropolitan Oak-

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FAA Contract Tower List (as of June 1, 2011)

246 TOWERS AS OF JUNE 1, 2011. 16 TOWERS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK ARE IN THE COST-SHARING PROGRAM.

AIRPORT NAME	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	STATE
Bethel	AK	Gainesville	FL
Kenai Municipal	AK	Hollywood	FL
King Salmon	AK	Craig (Jacksonville)	FL
Kodiak	AK	Key West	FL
Brookley (Mobile)	AL	Kissimmee	FL
Dothan	AL	Lakeland Municipal	FL
Tuscaloosa Regional	AL	Leesburg International	FL
Fayetteville	AR	Melbourne	FL
Northwest Arkansas Regional	AR	Naples	FL
*Rogers Municipal-Carter Field	AR	New Smyrna Beach Mun.	FL
*Springdale	AR	Ocala	FL
Texarkana Mun./Webb Field	AR	OpaLocka (Miami)	FL
Chandler	AZ	Ormond Beach Mun.	FL
Flagstaff Pulliam	AZ	Page Field	FL
Glendale	AZ	Palm Coast/Flagler County	FL
Goodyear (Phoenix)	AZ	Panama City/Bay Co.	FL
Laughlin/Bullhead City	AZ	Pompano Beach	FL
Phoenix-Mesa Gateway	AZ	St. Augustine	FL
Ryan (Tucson)	AZ	Stuart/Witham	FL
Castle	CA	Titusville/Cocoa	FL
Chico	CA	Athens Municipal	GA
Fullerton	CA	Fulton County	GA
Hawthorne	CA	Gwinnett County	GA
Mather (Sacramento)	CA	Macon	GA
Modesto	CA	McCollum	GA
Oxnard	CA	SW Georgia/Albany-Dougherty	GA
Palmdale	CA	Agana	Guam
Ramona Airport	CA	Kalaeloa	HI
Redding Municipal	CA	Kona/Keahole	HI
Riverside	CA	Lihue	HI
Sacramento Executive	CA	Molokai	HI
Salinas Municipal	CA	Dubuque	IA
San Carlos	CA	Friedman Memorial (Hailey)	ID
Brown Field (San Diego)	CA	Idaho Falls	ID
San Luis Obispo	CA	Lewiston-Nez Perce Co.	ID
Santa Maria	CA	Pocatello Municipal	ID
Vandenberg Air Force Base	CA	Bloomington/Normal	IL
Victorville	CA	Decatur	IL
Whiteman (Los Angeles)	CA	So. Illinois/Carbondale	IL
William J. Fox (Lancaster)	CA	St. Louis Regional	IL
Eagle County	CO	Waukegan Regional	IL
Front Range	CO	*Williamson County (Marion)	IL
Grand Junction	CO	Columbus Municipal	IN
Bridgeport	CT	Gary Regional	IN
Danbury	CT	*Monroe County/Bloomington	IN
New London (Groton)	CT	*Muncie/Delaware County	IN
Brainard (Hartford)	CT	Forbes Field (Topeka)	KS
Tweed-New Haven	CT	*Garden City	KS
Waterbury/Oxford	CT	Hutchinson Mun.	KS
Albert Whitted (St. Petersburg)	FL	Johnson Co. Exec.	KS
Boca Raton	FL	Manhattan	KS
Cecil Field (Jacksonville)	FL	New Century Air Center (Olathe)	KS

AIRPORT NAME	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	STATE
Philip Billard Mun. (Topeka)	KS	Double Eagle II	NM
Salina Municipal	KS	Farmington Municipal	NM
Barkley Regional (Paducah)	KY	*Lea County/Hobbs	NM
Owensboro/Daviess Co.	KY	Santa Fe Co. Mun.	NM
Acadiana Regional	LA	Henderson (Las Vegas)	NV
Alexandria	LA	Francis F. Gabreski	NY
Chennault	LA	Tompkins County	NY
Houma	LA	Niagara Falls	NY
Shreveport Downtown	LA	Rome-Griffiss	NY
Barnes Municipal	MA	Stewart	NY
Beverly	MA	Bolton Field (Columbus)	OH
Hyannis	MA	Burke Lakefront (Cleveland)	OH
Lawrence	MA	Cuyahoga County (Cleveland)	OH
Martha's Vineyard	MA	Lunken Mun. (Cincinnati)	OH
New Bedford	MA	Ohio State University	OH
Norwood	MA	*Ardmore Municipal	OK
Worcester	MA	Enid Woodring Mun.	OK
Easton	MD	Lawton-Ft. Sill Regional	OK
Martin State (Baltimore)	MD	Univ. of Oklahoma/Westheimer	OK
Salisbury-Wicomico	MD	Stillwater	OK
Washington Co. (Hagerstown)	MD	Wiley Post	OK
Battle Creek	MI	Klamath Falls	OR
Detroit City	MI	McNary Field (Salem)	OR
*Jackson	MI	Medford	OR
Sawyer	MI	North Bend	OR
Anoka (Minneapolis)	MN	Pendleton	OR
St. Cloud Regional	MN	Redmond	OR
Branson	MO	Troutdale (Portland)	OR
Columbia	MO	Capital City (Harrisburg)	PA
*Jefferson City	MO	Lancaster	PA
*Joplin Regional	MO	Latrobe	PA
Rosecrans Mem'l (St. Joseph)	MO	*Williamsport/Lycoming Co.	PA
Saipan International	MP	Isla Grande	Puerto Rico
Golden Triangle Regional	MS	Rafael Hernandez Airport	Puerto Rico
Greenville Municipal	MS	Greenville Donaldson Center	SC
Hawkins Field (Jackson)	MS	Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach	SC
Meridian/Key Field	MS	Greenville Downtown	SC
Olive Branch	MS	Hilton Head Airport	SC
Stennis International Airport	MS	Rapid City Regional	SD
Tupelo Regional	MS	Millington	TN
Gallatin Field (Bozeman)	MT	Smyrna	TN
Kalispell	MT	McKeller-Sipes (Jackson)	TN
Missoula	MT	Arlington Municipal	TX
Concord	NC	Brownsville Int'l	TX
Hickory Regional	NC	Denton Municipal	TX
Kinston	NC	Easterwood	TX
New Bern	NC	*Fort Worth-Spinks	TX
Smith Reynolds (Win.-Salem)	NC	Galveston	TX
Minot	ND	Georgetown	TX
*Central Neb. (Grand Island)	NE	*Grand Prairie	TX
Boire Field (Nashua)	NH	Laredo International	TX
Lebanon Municipal	NH	Lone Star Executive (Conroe)	TX
Trenton	NJ	McAllen	TX

AIRPORT NAME	STATE
McKinney Municipal	TX
Redbird	TX
Rio Grande Valley (Harlingen)	TX
San Angelo	TX
Stinson Municipal (San Antonio)	TX
Sugar Land	TX
Tyler	TX
Victoria	TX
Waco TSTC	TX
Ogden-Hinckley	UT
Provo Municipal	UT
Charlottesville-Albemarle	VA
Lynchburg	VA
Henry E. Rohlsen (St. Croix)	Virgin Islands
Bellingham Int'l	WA
Felts Field (Spokane)	WA
Olympia	WA
Renton	WA

AIRPORT NAME	STATE
Tacoma Narrows	WA
*Walla Walla Regional	WA
Yakima	WA
Appleton	WI
Central Wisconsin	WI
Chippewa Valley	WI
Kenosha Municipal	WI
Lacrosse	WI
Rock County (Janesville)	WI
Timmerman (Milwaukee)	WI
Waukesha County Airport	WI
Wittman Regional (Oshkosh)	WI
Greenbrier Valley	WV
Morgantown	WV
Parkersburg	WV
Wheeling Ohio Co.	WV
Cheyenne	WY
Jackson Hole	WY

land International Airport..."

Modesto has an FAA Contract Tower operated by SERCO.

U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION GAINS NEW MEMBERS

The newest members of the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) are the Port of Portland (Ore.), Raleigh County Memorial Airport (W.Va.), Punta Gorda Charlotte County Airport (Fla.), Renton Municipal Airport (Wash.), W.K. Kellogg Airport (Mich.), Ocala Regional Airport (Fla.) and Yakima Air Terminal (Wash.).

Members of the USCTA Policy Board are: Walter Strong, Jr., A.A.E., Norman, Okla., chair; Peter C. Deeks P.E., AJT Engineering, Inc.; Anthony Ware, Lake Charles, La.; Richard Lewis, Concord, N.C.; Brian Lally P.E., CTBX Aviation Group; Richard Baird, Hailey, Idaho; Rex Tippetts, A.A.E.; Grand Junction, Colo.; Jerry O'Sullivan, A.A.E.; Lewisburg, W.Va.; Russell Chandler, Jacksonville, Fla.; Steve Stockam, Joplin, Mo.; Shane Cordes, Midwest Air Traffic Control Service Inc.; Vinicio Llerena, C.M., ACE; New Braunfels, Texas; Tim Whitman, Bethany, Okla.; William Mitchell, Mesa, Ariz.; Charles Dove, Robinson Aviation Inc. (RVA); Luis Elgueza-bal, A.A.E.; San Angelo, Texas; Richard Howell, A.A.E.; San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Keith Kaspari, C.M., Gwinn, Mich.; Stephen Christmas, Serco North America; Gary Johnson, C.M.; Stillwater, Okla.; Scott Driver, C.M., Tucson, Ariz.; David Byers

AICP, C.M., Quadrex Aviation, LLC; Bryan Rodgers, State College, Pa.; Douglas Kimmel, Marion, Ill.; and John Root, Merritt Island, Fla.

Members of USCTA are: the State of Maryland, Hawaii Department of Transportation, South Carolina Division of Aeronautics, Oklahoma Airport Operators Association, Dothan Airport (Ala.), Mobile Downtown Airport (Ala.), Tuscaloosa Regional Airport (Ala.), City of Phoenix Aviation Department (Ariz.), Chandler Municipal Airport (Ariz.), Phoenix-Mesa Gateway (Ariz.), Flagstaff (Ariz.) Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport (Ariz.), Pulliam Airport (Ariz.), Tucson (Ariz.) Airport Authority, Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, Fayetteville Drake Field (Ark.), Texarkana Regional Airport (Ark.), Marana Regional Airport (Ariz.), Castle Airport (Calif.), San Luis Obispo County Airport (Calif.), Modesto City-County Airport (Calif.), Los Angeles County Aviation Division (Calif.), Oxnard (Calif.), Ramona Airport-San Diego (Calif.), Redding (Calif.) Municipal Airport, Salinas Municipal Airport (Calif.), San Bernardino (Calif.), Santa Maria Public Airport District (Calif.), Ventura County Department of Airports (Calif.), Front Range Airport (Colo.), Grand Junction Walker Field Airport (Colo.), Tweed New Haven Airport (Conn.), Boca Raton Airport (Fla.), Gainesville Regional Airport (Fla.), Jacksonville/Craig (Fla.), Cecil Field (Fla.), Flagler County Airport (Fla.), Kissimmee (Fla.), Lakeland Linder Regional Airport (Fla.), Martin County Stuart/Whitham Airport

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Towers In The News

Aviation Groups Seek Full Funding For Contract Towers

Aviation Daily
April 29

Major U.S. aviation industry groups are urging lawmakers to continue to support the FAA contract tower program as they begin work on the fiscal 2012 budget.

In a letter to House and Senate appropriators, the nine groups ask that the program be fully funded in the Transportation Department's (DOT) fiscal 2012 budget. Full funding, as requested by the Obama administration, would allocate \$121.8 million for the FAA contract tower program and \$10 million for the contract tower cost-sharing program.

The contract tower program has been in operation since 1982. While controllers at these towers are employed by private companies, they are certified and overseen by the FAA. There are 246 towers in the program, predominantly at smaller airports. According to the letter, these towers handle about 27% of control tower aircraft operations in the U.S. while accounting for just 9% of the budget allotted by the FAA for ATC tower operations.

The House Appropriations Committee has requested that the DOT's Inspector General conduct an audit of the contract tower program. Previous IG reports on the program have been positive, but lawmakers note that "continued funding for the program warrants another, more recent review," according to the IG. The audit is expected to begin this month.

FAA Announces Changes to Controller Scheduling

FAA Press Office
April 17, 2011

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Randy Babbitt today announced changes to air traffic controller scheduling practices that will allow controllers more time for rest between shifts.

"We expect controllers to come to work rested and ready to work and take personal responsibility for safety in the control towers. We have zero tolerance for sleeping on the job," said Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. "Safety is our top priority and we will continue to make whatever changes

are necessary."

"Research shows us that giving people the chance for even an additional one hour of rest during critical periods in a schedule can improve work performance and reduce the potential for fatigue," said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. "Taking advantage of the time you have to rest is also a professional responsibility."

The new scheduling rules have already been put in place and will be fully in effect by the end of the week:

- Controllers will now have a minimum of nine hours off between shifts. Currently they may have as few as eight.
- Controllers will no longer be able to swap shifts unless they have a minimum of 9 hours off between the last shift they worked and the one they want to begin.
- Controllers will no longer be able to switch to an unscheduled midnight shift following a day off.
- FAA managers will schedule their own shifts in a way to ensure greater coverage in the early morning and late night hours.

On Monday, FAA Administrator Babbitt and NATCA President Paul Rinaldi will be in Atlanta, where they will begin their Call to Action on air traffic control safety and professionalism meetings. The goal of the Call to Action is to reinforce the need for all air traffic personnel to adhere to the highest professional standards.

Over the course of this week, they will visit air traffic facilities in and around the following cities: Atlanta; Dallas-Ft. Worth; Kansas City; Chicago; New York; and Washington, DC. The two will also visit the air traffic control training academy at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City.

Senior members of both FAA and NATCA leadership teams will also be visiting additional FAA facilities nationwide over the next few weeks.

In addition to changes in scheduling practices, the Call to Action effort will include the development of a fatigue education program to teach controllers the risks of fatigue and how to avoid it.

The FAA will also commission an independent review of the air traffic control training curriculum and qualifications to make sure new controllers are properly prepared.

NATCA will expand its own Professional Standards program nationwide which focuses on peer-to-peer

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education for controllers on how to maintain the highest degree of professional conduct.

**Statement From FAA Administrator
Randy Babbitt**

FAA Press Office

April 14, 2011

Over the last few weeks we have seen examples of unprofessional conduct on the part of a few individuals that have rightly caused the traveling public to question our ability to ensure their safety. This conduct must stop immediately. I am committed to maintaining the highest level of public confidence and that begins with strong leadership.

This morning I met with the head of our Air Traffic Organization, the part of the Federal Aviation Administration charged with operating our air traffic control system. Hank Krakowski has submitted his resignation and I have accepted it. Hank is a dedicated aviation professional and I thank him for his service. Starting today, I have asked David Grizzle, FAA's chief counsel, to assume the role of acting ATO chief operating officer while we conduct a nationwide search to permanently fill the position.

We are conducting a top to bottom review of the way we operate our air traffic control system. We are all responsible and accountable for safety-from senior FAA leadership to the controller in the tower. Employees at the FAA work diligently every day to run the safest air transportation system in the world. But I will continue to make whatever changes are necessary to ensure we concentrate on keeping the traveling public safe.

**Republicans Channel Reagan
in Bid for Private Controllers**

Bloomberg News

March 8, 2011

A program started by President Ronald Reagan 30 years ago to staff U.S. air-traffic control towers with private workers may grow by more than a third under a plan being advanced by House Republicans.

Letting as many as 90 mostly low-traffic airports in places such as Lafayette, Indiana, switch from federal to private controllers may save \$100 million a year, said Representative John Mica, a Florida Republican who chairs the House transportation committee. The measure is part of Mica's \$59.7 billion aviation funding legislation pending on the House floor.

"When you're in tight financial times you look at

some ways you can save money," Mica said in an interview. He said he isn't sure if one or dozens of towers would convert to private workers, since the proposal leaves the decision up to airports.

The plan has been criticized by a former controllers' union president on safety grounds and questioned by the chairman of the Senate commerce committee. It would aid the three firms hired by the Federal Aviation Administration to provide workers for 246 towers already allowed to have private staff -- Robinson Aviation Inc., Midwest Air Traffic Control and Serco Group Plc.

Reagan began using private workers in 1982 at five towers closed the previous year during a strike that prompted him to fire 10,438 controllers. The number of airports in the so-called contract tower program grew as President Bill Clinton sought cost savings, sites without towers built them, and a federal report found the program to be effective and safe.

Low-Traffic Airports

Many of the airports handle fewer than 40 takeoffs and landings an hour. Several have scheduled flights, while others serve traffic such as business jets and propeller-driven planes that controllers separate without the use of radar.

"We have that bottom line that drives us to be efficient," said Bill Peacock, executive vice president for Oklahoma City-based Robinson, which staffs 93 sites with 500 workers. "FAA doesn't have that same bottom line."

Mica's provision is in legislation that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved 34-25 on Feb. 16. The House, now controlled by Republicans, may vote this month.

The Senate version, which that Democrat-controlled body approved Feb. 17, doesn't include the provision. The two versions would need to be reconciled in a conference committee before being sent to President Barack Obama for his signature.

Cost Difference

"Turning important government functions over to the highest bidder does not always deliver the best service or the best deal for taxpayers," Jay Rockefeller, a West Virginia Democrat who heads the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, said in a statement e-mailed by his spokeswoman.

Kenneth Mead, then the Transportation Department's inspector general, found in 2003 that each private tower cost \$917,000 less to operate per year than

a similar site with workers employed by the FAA. The difference was the greater pay and staffing for the public towers, the report found.

The contract towers on average were staffed with six workers, compared with 10 and 12 in FAA towers, according to the report. Managers didn't work traffic in the FAA towers while they did at the contract sites, and the FAA uses the small operations to train new controllers, accounting for the differences, he said.

The report hasn't been updated by Mead's successor. The cost difference between the tower types has likely grown due to expense escalations at the FAA, Mead said in an interview. His 2003 report also found both types of towers were safer than the FAA's overall average for operating errors.

'Extraordinary Budget Pressures'

"FAA is under extraordinary budget pressures on a broad front to do things in a cost-effective, safe way," Mead said in the interview. "The days of increasing budgets, I think, have come to an end."

The FAA came within days of laying off workers and halting airport grants in 2003 due to a dispute that stalled passage of legislation to fund the agency, over the issue of adding private workers to 69 towers. President George W. Bush's administration backed down on the privatization push and the towers weren't added to the program, after opposition led by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association union.

Patrick Forrey, the association's former president, said increasing the number of towers with lower staffing levels would erode a safety margin that depends on having a well-rested workforce. "You get what you pay for," Forrey said. "Cheaper doesn't mean it will be safer."

Age 55 Rule

Doug Church, a spokesman for the union, which represents 15,677 of the controllers, declined to comment. The union also represents private workers at 62 small towers.

The FAA also declined to comment, said spokesman Paul Takemoto.

Most workers in the program are retired controllers from the military or FAA, which has a mandatory retirement age of 55, according to airport executives. The private controllers aren't covered by the mandatory retirement age.

"The folks who are 55 or older are still extremely talented," said Shane Cordes, chief executive officer of Overland, Kansas-based Midwest Air. "Aviation is a passion. People once in it find it hard to get out."

Alan Hill, a spokesman for Hook, England-based Serco, declined to comment and referred questions to the FAA.

'Have a Nice Day'

When Clinton replaced federal air-traffic controllers at Greenville Downtown Airport in South Carolina with private workers in 1993, airport director Joe Frasher said he worried the quality of the operation would dip.

"I have found, in fact, quite the opposite," Frasher said. "The service is excellent."

In Hailey, Idaho, where visitors to Sun Valley resort arrive, Serco controllers are needed for "head-to-head" traffic that lands and takes off in the same direction due to mountains, said Rick Baird, the airport's manager.

"It's a very friendly type of service," Baird said of Serco. "It's not unusual for one of our guys, after they've done one of their jobs, to tell people to have a nice day."

In Salina, Kansas, controllers often take extra time to resubmit flight plans in the event of weather delays, said Timothy Rogers, the airport's executive director.

The airport had no choice when the FAA put it in the private controller program in 1989, he said. Now, "I would not want the FAA to take Salina out," Rogers said. "The transition's been good."

By Ron Lapp

ATC Flyer (Serco North America)

March 2011

After eight years of living in Alaska, our family decided it was time for a move, and I took a transfer to Idaho Falls Tower (IDA), Idaho. The plan was to pull a 20-foot travel trailer with a 4X4 SUV through Alaska and Canada to IDA.

Temperatures on the trip reached minus 39 degrees; the roads were icy and questionable (think Ice Road Truckers). My wife, Amber, and I drove through some of the highest mountain terrain in the world and endured a very difficult snow storm. On day four, near Calgary, winds were picking up and the snow was blowing across the highway. We hit black ice. Amber did a great job of controlling the vehicle; steering right, left, and then right again, nearly stopping before the trailer came around and flipped us on our side.

We were unharmed, but were now stranded in Canada. The trailer was a complete loss and the SUV

(continued on following page)

would take six weeks to get repaired. A rental car was not an option since Homeland Security won't let you rent one in Canada and drop it off in the U.S. I called Taleesha Hillman, my new ATM at IDA, and, to my surprise, she had a relative in Calgary. He gave us and our belongings a ride to the U.S. border, and Taleesha and her husband met us with a rental car and their truck to haul our belongings the remainder of the way. Ten hours later we were in Idaho.

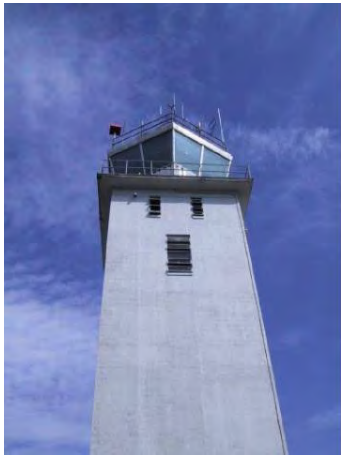
Amber returned to Alaska, grateful our five children were not with us. Once our house in Alaska sells, my family will join me in Idaho.

I would like to express my thanks to the following controllers at Idaho Falls Tower: the Hillmans who after two days on the road got us to Idaho Falls; Dennis Partridge who let me stay at his house until I found a place; and Angela Buckley who is storing my personal items in her basement until my wife and family get fully moved.

I can't say enough about the Serco family, including the PMO, who expressed their concern and care about our well being.

SMYRNA AIRPORT EXTENDS TOWER HOURS

The Smyrna /Rutherford County Airport Authority announced an increase in hours of operation for the Smyrna Air Traffic Control Tower.



Smyrna ATC Tower

Airport Executive Director John Black stated, "The extension of hours until 10 p.m. greatly enhances the level of services provided to our customers and clients conducting businesses in Rutherford County. It was through a concerted effort with the FAA and corporate aviation busi-

nesses that we were able to establish the new schedule."

The air traffic control tower at Smyrna is part of FAA's Contract Tower Program that provides air traffic control services at more than 225 airports across the U.S. Smyrna joined the program in 1991 with the creation of the newly formed Smyrna/Rutherford County Airport Authority, which will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

Smyrna Tower manager Danny Nichols comment-

ed that "this improvement makes our coordination with Nashville tower even more seamless."

The expansion of services at the Smyrna tower also means more for the local economy through the addition of two new air traffic controllers. "One of our goals at the airport is to create jobs and attract business through the development of the airport business park. These additional service amenities will aid in the recruitment of corporate business," according to airport authority Chairman Mike Woods.



The new contract tower tower at St. Petersburg's Albert Whitted, (Fla.) Airport.



(above) Air Force One with President Obama aboard landed Feb. 10 at Keith Kaspari's Sawyer (Mich.) International Airport, which has an FAA contract tower. Photo below shows the President's helicopter, which also landed at the airport.





The new McKinney, Texas, ATCT that was commissioned on Feb. 16, 2011.

Tower Opening Delayed at University Park Airport
StateCollege.com
 Feb. 4, 2011

When Air Force One landed Thursday at University Park Airport, President Barack Obama likely had a perfect view of the pristine, \$3.9 million traffic-control tower there.

The new facility, financed in part by federal money, has been a local point of pride. Construction-wrapped up this winter, and officials celebrated Dec. 7 the improved safety and efficiency that the 82-foot-tower should deliver.

But the tower, expected to open in January, has not started operations yet, airport Director Bryan Rodgers confirmed late Thursday.

In fact, no members of a planned seven- to eight-member air-traffic-control staff have been hired.

“Without it,” Rodgers said of the tower, “we don’t have that enhancement of safety that we’ve been working so hard to have.”

He said the delay is rooted in Washington, D.C.

The staff of U.S. Rep. Glenn “G.T.” Thompson, R-Howard, explained the issue is tied to a continuing resolution that will expire in March.

The Democratically controlled former Congress passed the federal resolution during its lame-duck session in December. That measure set government-program funding

at 2010 levels for the first few months of 2011.

And that includes funding for the Federal Aviation Administration, which is expected to pay for staffing at the University Park Airport tower.

Because the FAA is currently operating at 2010 funding levels, it appears the agency doesn’t have the money on hand to hire for the tower right now. An FAA spokesman would say only that the agency’s goal is to have the tower operational by March.

In an interview Friday evening, Thompson criticized former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic leadership of the last House. Under their guidance, he said, the House last year did not introduce a federal budget — the first time that’s happened since the mid-1970s.

Thompson called the situation “completely unacceptable.”

“I think the bigger problem here is ... that Speaker Pelosi and the party from last year did not do a budget,” Thompson said. “... Funding the government through a continuing resolution is no way to do business.”

The new Congress is slated to begin new budget discussions for 2011 next week. Within a couple of weeks, Thompson said he expects the House will pass an interim funding resolution to carry the government through the rest of this fiscal year.

A longer process is expected as the Congress establishes a separate budget for the following fiscal year.

In both budget cases, Thompson said, it will be FAA leaders’ responsibility to divvy up their new federal allocations for regional needs, including the local airport tower.

“I’m absolutely hopeful that the FAA has included in their plans” some staffing for the new tower, Thompson said.

StateCollege.com has reached out to the offices of U.S. Sens. Bob Casey and Pat Toomey, as well, and will post additional details as they become available.

Rodgers, meanwhile, said the airport learned “at the 11th hour” that the tower would not be staffed as scheduled in January. The alert came from the FAA in mid- to late-December, he said.

“As a community and as an airport, we’ve done our part. We designed and built the facility, put considerable time, effort and dollars into that,” Rodgers said. “Now we’re subject to the circumstances we find ourselves in with the lack of a budget. ...

“We are crossing our fingers and hoping that it will be resolved sooner rather than later,” he said.

He said the airport has made the area’s federal legislators aware of the tower staffing issue. “They’ve

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Tower Opening Delayed

(Continued from previous page)

been supportive of this project,” Rodgers added.

The tower is the first at the airport, which began operation in the 1950s. A combination of local, state and federal funds paid for the improvement project. And while its core goal is to bolster safety and efficiency of air traffic, it’s also expected to make the airport more attractive to aviation operators.

That, in turn, is expected to help the local economy.

For now, air traffic at University Park Airport is continuing to be managed from New York Center, a control facility near New York City.

USCTA Gains Members

(Continued from page 6)

(Fla.), Melbourne International Airport (Fla.), Naples Municipal Airport (Fla.), New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport (Fla.), Ocala Regional Airport (Fla.), Okaloosa County (Fla.), Opa Locka (Fla.), Ormond Beach Municipal (Fla.), Panama City-Bay County International Airport (Fla.), Punta Gorda Charlotte County Airport (Fla.), Valdosta Regional Airport (Ga.), Cobb County McCollum Airport (Ga.), Gwinnett County Airport (Ga.), Friedman Memorial Airport (Idaho), Idaho Falls Regional Airport (Idaho), Pocatello Regional Airport (Idaho), Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport (Idaho), Decatur (Ill.), Joliet (Ill.), Southern Illinois Airport, St. Louis Regional Airport (Ill.), Waukegan Regional Airport (Ill.), Williamson County Regional Airport (Ill.), Monroe County Airport (Ind.), Delaware County Airport (Muncie, Ind.), Columbus Municipal Airport (Ind.), Gary/Chicago International Airport (Ind.), Dubuque Regional Airport (Iowa),

Manhattan Regional Airport (Kan.), Metro Topeka Airport Authority (Kan.), New Century (Kan.), Manhattan (Kan.), Salina Municipal Airport (Kan.), Garden City Regional Airport (Kan.), Paducah Airport (Ky.), Alexandria International Airport (La.), Chenault International Airport (La.), Shreveport Airport Authority (La.), Easton Airport (Md.), Frederick Municipal Airport (Md.), Hagerstown Regional Airport (Md.), Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico (Md.) Regional Airport, Martin State Airport (Md.), Beverly Municipal Airport (Mass.); Martha’s Vineyard Airport (Mass.); Westfield-Barnes Municipal (Mass.), Coleman A. Young International Airport (Mich.),

W.K. Kellogg Airport (Mich.), Sawyer International Airport (Mich.), Metropolitan Airports Commission (Minn.), St. Cloud Regional Airport (Minn.), Golden Triangle (Miss.), Jackson Municipal (Miss.), Meridian Regional Airport (Miss.), Olive Branch Municipal Airport (Miss.), Stennis International Airport (Miss.), Branson Airport (Mo.), Columbia Regional Airport (Mo.), Joplin Regional Airport (Mo.), Jefferson City Memorial Airport (Mo.), Glacier Park International (Mont.), Gallatin Field (Mont.), Central Nebraska Regional Airport, Nashua (N.H.) Airport Authority, Trenton-Mercer Airport (N.J.), Albuquerque Double Eagle II Airport (N.M.), Coastal Carolina Regional Airport (N.C.), Concord Regional Airport (N.C.), Craven Regional Airport (N.C.), Hickory Regional Airport (N.C.), Columbus Bolton Field (Ohio), Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport (Ohio), Cincinnati Lunken Field (Ohio), Ohio State University Airport (Ohio), Ardmore Municipal Airport (Okla.), Max Westheimer Field (Okla.), Stillwater Municipal Airport (Okla.), Lawton-St. Sill Regional Airport (Okla.), Wiley Post Airport (Okla.), Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Klamath Falls Airport (Ore.), Port of Portland (Ore.), Southwest Oregon Regional Airport, Arnold Palmer Regional Airport (Latrobe, Pa.), Capital City Airport (Pa.), University Park Airport (Pa.), Donaldson Field (S.C.), Greenville Downtown Airport (S.C.), Millington Municipal Airport (Tenn.), Jackson Madison County Airport (Tenn.), Denton Municipal (Texas), Dennison (Texas), Galveston Municipal Airport (Texas), Harlingen Valley International (Texas), Brownsville/South Padre Island International (Texas), Lone Star Executive Airport (Texas), Grayson County Airport (Texas), Collin County Regional (Texas), San Angelo Regional Airport (Texas), San Antonio Stinson Municipal Airport (Texas), Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport (Va.), Lynchburg Regional Airport (Va.), Renton Municipal Airport (Wash.), Spokane Felts Field (Wash.), Bellingham International Airport (Wash.), Olympia Airport (Wash.), Walla Walla Regional Airport (Wash.), Yakima Air Terminal (Wash.), Wheeling Ohio County Airport (W. Va.), Greenbrier Valley Airport (W.Va.), Raleigh County (W.Va.) Memorial Airport, Chippewa Valley Regional Airport (Wis.), Kenosha Regional Airport (Wis.), Milwaukee Timmerman (Wis.) Airport, LaCrosse Municipal (Wis.), Central Wisconsin Airport (Wis.), Waukesha County Airport (Wis.), Cheyenne Airport (Wyo.), Jackson Hole Airport (Wyo.), Oklahoma Airport Operators

(Continued from page 14)

FAA CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

“THE GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP DEDICATED TO AIR TRAFFIC SAFETY”

FY '12 Congressional Appropriations Request

The American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), its affiliated organization, the U.S. Contract Tower Association, request \$121.8 million in the FY '12 DOT/FAA Appropriations bill for FAA's base line (fully funded) Contract Tower Program, in addition to \$10 million for the continuation of the cost-share program supported by Congress last year. These requested funding levels will provide funding necessary to continue and enhance the existing program, as well as to add contract towers at approximately three non-towered airports during FY '12.

Background

- The FAA Contract Tower Program has provided cost-effective and essential air traffic safety services at smaller airports since 1982. Currently, 246 airports in 46 states participate in the program (230 in the fully funded base line program and 16 in the cost-share program).
- To illustrate the cost-effectiveness of the program to taxpayers, the 246 towers in the FAA Contract Tower Program in FY '10 handled 27 percent of all U.S. tower operations (14.8 million operations), but accounted for just 9 percent (approximately \$126 million) of the FAA's overall budget allotted to air traffic control tower operations. In contrast, the 264 FAA-staffed towers that handled the remaining 74 percent of total tower operations (40 million operations), consumed 91 percent (approximately \$1.25 billion) of the FAA's budget dedicated to that purpose.
- As a result of this 29-year highly successful government/industry partnership, the FAA Contract Tower Program: (1) provides significant cost savings to FAA and taxpayers; (2) enhances aviation safety at airports that in many cases would not have a tower; (3) helps smaller airports retain and develop commercial air service and general aviation; (4) promotes economic development and creates jobs locally; and (5) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users (pilots, airlines, FBOs, flight schools and corporate flight departments).
- The safety, cost-effectiveness and ATC efficiency record of the FAA Contract Tower Program for the past two decades has been validated numerous times by the DOT Office of Inspector General (IG) and FAA safety audits, as well as by the National Transportation Safety Board.
- All federal contract controllers are FAA-certified air traffic controllers who meet the identical training and operating standards as FAA-employed controllers. The vast majority of federal contract controllers are retired military or FAA controllers. Approximately 99 percent have FAA or military air traffic control experience.
- FAA controls and oversees all aspects of the federal Contract Tower 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.
- In summary, without a federal program that 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 on FAA's Contract Tower Program, please contact Spencer Dickerson of the AAAE office at 703/824-0500, ext. 130 or email at sdickerson@aaae.org or visit www.airportnet.org/cta.

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CONTRACT TOWER WORKSHOP PLANNED

The annual USCTA/AAAE/FAA Contract Tower Workshop is scheduled for July 26-27 in Washington, D.C.

Go to <http://events.aaae.org/sites/110708/> for the workshop agenda, registration and hotel information. Time is set aside on Tuesday afternoon, July 26, for attendees to set up meetings with their respective congressional delegations to discuss the contract tower program and other airport priorities.

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