

# U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AIRPORT EXECUTIVES

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## CONTRACT TOWER SUMMIT RECOMMENDED TO ADDRESS B/C FORMULA ISSUES

The Policy Board for the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) unanimously agreed at its July 17 meeting in Washington, D.C., to recommend the convening of an FAA/industry summit this fall to address the major problems airport operators experience in understanding the benefit/cost (b/c) formula FAA uses to determine eligibility for the contract tower program.

Among the b/c issues the USCTA Policy Board will recommend be discussed at the summit are (1) the consistent treatment of all FAR Part 121 operations, regardless of size, in the b/c ratio; (2) the simplification of the b/c contract tower establishment and discontinuance criteria; (3) easier access by an airport to its individual b/c ratio; (4) a detailed explanation of the assumptions used in the b/c formula, and (5) the consistent application of the b/c ratio from airport to airport.

The USCTA Policy Board addressed a number of other important and timely contract tower issues at its meeting, including the status of USCTA membership; USCTA membership services; status of congressional/

FAA/National Transportation Safety Board support for the contract tower program; information on the 22 airports that received the two-year funding cut-off warning letter; contract tower bidding procedure reforms, and a cost-sharing recommendation for airports with b/c ratios of below 1.0. Also discussed was the fact that it appeared Congress would provide the full \$43.7 million being requested by DOT/FAA and supported by AAAE/USCTA to fully operate the contract tower program in fiscal year 1998.

Policy Board members also discussed ways to maintain an optimum working relationship with contract air traffic controllers at their airports. It was determined that communication is a vital ingredient to a successful relationship. All USCTA members are urged to maintain a consistent exchange of information between the airport and the contract controllers.

Participating in the USCTA Policy Board meeting were Richard Baird of Hailey, Idaho; Ron Craft of Jefferson City, Mo.; Roger Engstrom, A.A.E., of Mobile, Ala.; James Hansford, A.A.E., of Mosinee, Wis.; Glenn Januska, A.A.E., of Waukesha, Wis.; Tim Rogers, A.A.E., of Salina, Kan.; Ted Soliday of Naples, Fla.; Steve Stockam of Joplin, Mo.; Bryan Elliott, A.A.E., of Charlottesville, Va.; Spencer Dickerson of the USCTA staff, and the Washington consultants for the USCTA, Linda Hall Daschle, Pat McCann and Larry Barnett.

## CHALLENGES FACING CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM OUTLINED AT WORKSHOP

More than 50 airport executives, FAA staff and other aviation officials participated in the FAA/U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA)/AAAE Contract Tower Workshop, July 17-18 in Washington, D.C.

Airports or ATC companies interested in joining the USCTA should contact Spencer Dickerson at the AAAE/USCTA offices at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 130.

U.S. CONTRACT TOWER  
ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER

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THE U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER is published by the American  
Association of Airport Executives, the largest profes-  
sional organization for airport executives in the world.

Monte Belger, acting deputy administrator of the FAA, was the keynote speaker and expressed strong support for the contract tower program. Other speakers included Sam Whitehorn, senior democratic counsel of the Senate aviation subcommittee; airport representatives, and officials from several ATC companies. The program included a detailed briefing by FAA on the current contract tower program and the challenges facing the program over the long term.

It was emphasized during the workshop that the b/c ratio is key to the contract tower program and FAA annually will compute the ratios for contract tower and candidate sites. Airports are advised to know their facility's b/c ratio and to ensure that FAA is using the correct historical statistics to compute the ratio, which are the total enplanements and total operations. It is also essential that FAA is using acceptable terminal area forecast (TAF) information. Airports may check on the numbers FAA is using for their facility by accessing FAA's Internet site at [http://api.hq.faa.gov/apo\\_home.htm](http://api.hq.faa.gov/apo_home.htm)

Appreciation is extended to Midwest ATC, Serco Aviation Services and COMARCO for their generous financial support of the meeting.

### **FAA EXPANDS CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM TO 160 TOWERS**

FAA has contracted out 25 additional Level I towers, bringing the total number of towers in the Federal Contract Tower Program to 160. The latest to join the program is Battle Creek, Mich., which is expected to convert on Sept. 1.

The newly added towers are: Kodiak, Alaska; Columbia, Mo.; Dubuque, Iowa; Forbes Field, Kansas; Ithaca, N.Y.; Parkersburg, W.Va.; Jackson, Mich.; Ohio State University, Ohio; Lacrosse, Wis.; Burke Lakefront, Ohio; Battle Creek, Mich.; Minot, N.D.; Bridgeport, Conn.; Beverly, Mass.; New Bedford, Mass.; Norwood, Mass.; Lawrence, Mass.; Yakima, Wash.; Tacoma Narrows, Wash.; Dothan, Ala.; Pompano Beach, Fla.; Hollywood, Fla.; San Angelo, Texas; Houma, La., and Riverside, Calif.

For a complete breakdown of the towers in FAA's program, see the list on page 3 of this issue.

### **USCTA MEMBERSHIP REACHES 47 AIRPORTS, FOUR ATC COMPANIES**

A total of 47 airports and four ATC companies are now members of the U.S. Contract Tower Association.

USCTA receives oversight from a Policy Board comprised of the following members: Roger Eng-

strom, A.A.E., (Mobile, Ala.), Jack Schelter, A.A.E., (Phoenix, Ariz.), Ted Soliday (Naples, Fla.), Richard Baird (Hailey, Idaho), Tim Rogers, A.A.E., (Salina, Kan.), Ron Craft (Jefferson City, Mo.), Steve Stockam (Joplin, Mo.), Steve Brian (Kinston, N.C.), Bryan Elliott, A.A.E., (Charlottesville, Va.), Glenn Januska, A.A.E., (Waukesha, Wis.) and James Hansford, A.A.E., (Mosinee, Wis.). Shane Cordes of Midwest ATC serves as an ex-officio member of the Policy Board. Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of AAE, serves as executive director of the USCTA. Consultants to the association are Linda Hall Daschle of Baker, Donelson; Patrick McCann of the Wexler, Group and Larry Barnett of AB Management Associates.

In addition to San Carlos, Calif., the newest member of USCTA, the following are the members of the association: Mobile Downtown Airport (Ala.), City of Phoenix Aviation Department (Ariz.), Mesa/Williams Gateway (Ariz.), Glendale Municipal Airport (Ariz.), Texarkana Regional Airport (Ark.), San Carlos Airport (Calif.), San Luis Obispo County Airport (Calif.), Modesto City-County Airport (Calif.), Los Angeles County Aviation Division (Calif.), Ramona Airport-County of San Diego (Calif.), Bradley International Airport (Conn.), Boca Raton Airport (Fla.), Martin County Airport (Fla.), Naples Municipal Airport (Fla.), Titusville-Cocoa Airport (Fla.), Page Field (Fla.), Friedman Memorial Airport (Idaho), Waukegan Regional Airport (Ill.), St. Louis Regional Airport (Ill.), Williamson County Regional Airport (Ill.), Salina Municipal Airport (Kan.), Johnson County Executive Airport (Kan.), Bowling Green (Ky.), Barkley Regional Airport (Ky.), Martin State Airport (Md.), Westfield Barnes Airport (Mass.), Joplin Regional Airport (Mo.), Jefferson City Memorial Airport (Mo.), Cape Girardeau Regional (Mo.), Gallatin Field (Mont.); Kinston Regional Jetport (N.C.), Bolton Field (Ohio); Burke Lakefront Airport (Ohio), Cuyahoga County Airport (Ohio), Max Westheimer Field (Okla.), Redmond Municipal Airport (Ore.), Greenville Downtown Airport (S.C.), Jackson-Madison County Airport (Tenn.), Smyrna Rutherford County (Tenn.), Stinson Municipal Airport (Texas), Laredo International Airport (Texas), Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport (Va.),

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### **USCTA TAKES TO THE INTERNET!**

The USCTA now has its own Internet home page, which will provide association members with the latest in publications, meeting announcements, press releases and Internet links to other valuable web sites. The address is:

<http://www.airportnet.org/cta/>

**FOLLOWING IS THE CURRENT LIST OF  
FAA CONTRACT TOWERS**

*(as of August 1997)*

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Bethel	AAL	AK	Timmerman (Milwaukee)	AGL	WI
King Salmon	AAL	AK	Wittman Regional	AGL	WI
Kodiak	AAL	AK			
Dubuque Iowa	ACE	IA	Bridgeport	ANE	CT
Forbes Field	ACE	KS	Groton-New London	ANE	CT
Hutchinson Mun.	ACE	KS	Hartford-Brainard	ANE	CT
Johnson Co. Exec.	ACE	KS	Tweed-New Haven	ANE	CT
Philip Billard Mun.	ACE	KS	Barnes Municipal	ANE	MA
Salina Municipal	ACE	KS	Beverly	ANE	MA
Columbia	ACE	MO	Hyannis	ANE	MA
Joplin Regional	ACE	MO	Lawrence	ANE	MA
Rosecrans Mem'l/St. Joseph	ACE	MO	Martha's Vineyard	ANE	MA
Central Neb./Grand Island	ACE	NE	New Bedford	ANE	MA
			Norwood	ANE	MA
Martin State	AEA	MD	Worcester	ANE	MA
Washington Co. Reg'l/Hagerstown	AEA	MD	Boire Field/Nashua	ANE	NH
Ithaca	AEA	NY			
Niagara Falls	AEA	NY	Eagle County	ANM	CO
Oneida County	AEA	NY	Friedman Memorial	ANM	ID
Stewart	AEA	NY	Idaho Falls	ANM	ID
Williamsport/Lycoming Co.	AEA	PA	Lewiston-Nez Perce Co.	ANM	ID
Charlottesville-Albemarle	AEA	VA	Pocatello Municipal	ANM	ID
Lynchburg	AEA	VA	Klamath Falls	ANM	OR
Greenbrier Valley	AEA	WV	McNary Field	ANM	OR
Morgantown	AEA	WV	Pendleton Municipal	ANM	OR
Parkersburg	AEA	WV	Redmond	ANM	OR
Wheeling Ohio Co.	AEA	WV	Troutdale (Portland)	ANM	OR
			Ogden-Hinckley Mun.	ANM	UT
Decatur	AGL	IL	Bellingham Int'l	ANM	WA
Meigs Field (Chicago)	AGL	IL	Olympia	ANM	WA
St. Louis Regional	AGL	IL	Tacoma Narrows	ANM	WA
So. Illinois/Carbondale	AGL	IL	Walla Walla Regional	ANM	WA
Waukegan Regional	AGL	IL	Yakima	ANM	WA
Williamson County	AGL	IL	Cheyenne	ANM	WY
Gary Regional	AGL	IN			
Battle Creek	AGL	MI	Dothan	ASO	AL
Detroit City	AGL	MI	Brookley (Mobile)	ASO	AL
Jackson	AGL	MI	Tuscaloosa Municipal	ASO	AL
Anoka (Minneapolis)	AGL	MN	Athens Municipal	ASO	GA
Minot	AGL	ND	Fulton County	ASO	GA
Burke Lakefront	AGL	OH	Gwinnett County	ASO	GA
Ohio State University	AGL	OH	McCullum	ASO	GA
Cincinnati Mun./Lunken	AGL	OH	SW Georgia/Albany-Dougherty	ASO	GA
Cuyahoga County	AGL	OH	Valdosta Municipal	ASO	GA
Rapid City Regional	AGL	SD	Albert Whitted	ASO	FL
Appleton	AGL	WI	Gainesville	ASO	FL
Central Wisconsin	AGL	WI	Hollywood	ASO	FL
Kenosha Municipal	AGL	WI	Jacksonville/Craig	ASO	FL
Lacrosse	AGL	WI	Key West	ASO	FL
Rock County	AGL	WI			

*(continued on following page)*

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Kissimmee	ASO	FL
Lakeland Municipal	ASO	FL
Naples	ASO	FL
Page Field	ASO	FL
Panama City/Bay Co.	ASO	FL
Pompano Beach	ASO	FL
Stuart/Whitham	ASO	FL
Titusville/Cocoa	ASO	FL
Barkley Regional	ASO	KY
Owensboro/Daviess Co.	ASO	KY
Greenville Municipal	ASO	MS
Hawkins Field	ASO	MS
Meridian/Key Field	ASO	MS
Kingston	ASO	NC
Isla Grande	ASO	Puerto Rico
Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach	ASO	SC
Greenville Downtown	ASO	SC
Jackson	ASO	TN
Smyrna	ASO	TN
Alexander Hamilton (St. Croix)	ASO	Virgin Islands
Fayetteville	ASW	AR
Texarkana Mun./Webb Field	ASW	AR
Riverside	ASW	CA
Acadiana Regional	ASW	LA
Esler Regional Reg'l	ASW	LA
Houma	ASW	LA
Farmington Municipal	ASW	NM
Lea County/Hobbs	ASW	NM
Santa Fe Co. Mun.	ASW	NM
Ardmore Municipal	ASW	OK
Enid Woodring Mun.	ASW	OK
Univ. of Oklahoma/Westheimer	ASW	OK
Wiley Post	ASW	OK

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Brownsville Int'l	ASW	TX
Easterwood	ASW	TX
Grand Prairie	ASW	TX
Laredo International	ASW	TX
McAllen	ASW	TX
Mesquite	ASW	TX
Redbird	ASW	TX
San Angelo	ASW	TX
Stinson Municipal (San Antonio)	ASW	TX
Tyler	ASW	TX
Chandler	AWP	AZ
Flagstaff Pulliam	AWP	AZ
Glendale	AWP	AZ
Goodyear (Phoenix)	AWP	AZ
Mesa/Williams Gateway	AWP	AZ
Ryan	AWP	AZ
Fullerton	AWP	CA
Hawthorne	AWP	CA
Modesto	AWP	CA
Lake Tahoe	AWP	CA
Oxnard	AWP	CA
Palmdale	AWP	CA
Sacramento Executive	AWP	CA
Salinas Municipal	AWP	CA
San Carlos	AWP	CA
San Louis Obispo	AWP	CA
Santa Maria	AWP	CA
Whiteman	AWP	CA
William J. Fox	AWP	CA
Agana	AWP	Guam
Lihue	AWP	HI
Molokai	AWP	HI
Elko	AWP	NV

Walla Walla Municipal Airport (Wash.), Wheeling-Ohio County Airport (W.Va.), Greenbrier Valley Airport (W.Va.), Central Wisconsin Airport (Wis.), Waukesha County Airport (Wis.), Midwest Air Traffic Control Services, Inc., COMARCO Airport Services, Serco Management Services and Walker Air Traffic Services.

Airports and companies interested in joining the organization should contact Spencer Dickerson of AAAE at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 130.

#### **SUPPORT SHOWN ON CAPITOL HILL FOR GROWTH OF CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM**

The contract tower program has attracted attention on Capitol Hill and recently emerged in a question directed at FAA Administrator-designate Jane Garvey.

Among questions submitted to Garvey to be answered following her confirmation hearing before the Senate aviation subcommittee was a request from Sen. Wendell Ford (D-Ky.), ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, for her thoughts on the proposed cost-sharing partnership that would allow airports with b/c ratios below 1.0 to participate in the contract tower program. Ford described the contract tower program as a "cost-effective way to enhance safety at smaller airports" and noted that, under such a partnership, FAA and the local airport would each assume a percentage of the annual operating costs of the tower. He asked if Garvey would be willing to work with Congress to develop and implement such a plan.

Garvey responded that, "Based on the briefings I  
(continued on page 6)

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have received, I agree with you on the benefits associated with the contract tower program. I have not yet studied cost-sharing, but would be pleased to work with you and the committee to explore alternatives to improve safety and efficiency.”

Separately, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, in a letter to James McCue, A.A.E., manager of the Glendale (Ariz.) Municipal Airport, referred to the contract tower program as enhancing safety and increasing economic productivity for small communities, while providing significant savings to FAA. McCain pledged to keep the program in mind when his committee reauthorizes funding for FAA.

In another example, the Senate transportation appropriations subcommittee’s conference report on the fiscal year 1998 DOT bill noted the panel’s concern about the pending loss of funding for towers at 22 airports nationwide unless the b/c ratio at the facilities exceeds 1.0 by the end of 1998. The committee said it would monitor developments at these airports and urged FAA to explore alternatives to withdrawing funding, such as sharing tower operating costs. In addition, the committee directed FAA to study traffic at airports in New Bern and Hickory, N.C., and at the Salisbury/Wicomico County Regional Airport in Maryland. If these airports meet or are projected to meet FAA’s b/c criteria within the next two years, or if tower operation could be justified under a cost-sharing arrangement, FAA is directed to open contract towers at these airports for service during fiscal year 1998.

Acting FAA Deputy Administrator Monte Belger testified before the Senate transportation appropriations subcommittee in June and explained that from 1993-1996, FAA reduced the controller workforce through its successful initiative to contract out the low activity Level I towers. “Once this initiative is completed, we will have effectively reduced the controller workforce requirements by approximately 1,000 for an annual savings of approximately \$25 million, with no adverse impact on safety,” he said. “During this period, controller hiring averaged only 100 per year because we were also reassigning approximately 200 controllers per year from the closed Level I towers to higher level facilities.”

Following Belger’s testimony, Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), subcommittee chairman, questioned him about the proposed cost-sharing partnership to split the operating cost of a contract tower. Belger responded, “I am very much in favor of these types of arrangements, particularly if it will provide service

in the form of an air traffic control tower that we otherwise could not provide because it does not meet our criteria.”

Members of Congress have also sent letters of support for the contract tower program to individual airport managers.

- Rep. Helen Chenoweth (R-Idaho) noted that the program “is a cost effective way to ensure that small airports are just as safe as large ones. I also understand that as small communities continue to grow and expand, there will be more and more need for this program to provide vital equipment to small airports.”
- Ford, of Kentucky, pointed out that the airports at Paducah and Owensboro, Ky., are participating in the program “and it has proven to be very successful, earning praise from all users of the system. The contract tower program will continue to play an important role in our efforts to improve the overall safety and efficiency of the air traffic control system.”
- Rep. Charles Canady (R-Fla.) commented that, “Given the rapid growth of air traffic in Florida in particular and the nation in general, I agree that the FAA contract tower program makes an important contribution to our nation’s air safety. A balanced federal budget is and should be a top priority for Congress, but air travel and safety are matters which the federal government must not place at risk.”
- Sen. Dirk Kempthorne (R-Idaho) stated that the program “is important to my state of Idaho because of our large geographic area, which is serviced by several small airports throughout the state. In light of the decreases in grants to smaller airports, it is imperative that the control tower program be fully funded in an effort to maintain a high level of safety. Not only does this program enhance safety for small airports, but it also provides a large economic spinoff for communities which receive an increase in the number of airlines serving their region. As an example, the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport has seen a 33 percent increase in airlines servicing the area, in addition to a 20 percent-50 percent increase in airline passenger activity. This has had a significant economic impact on the Lewiston-Nez Perce area, which otherwise would not have occurred.”

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## AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL DEBATE

The article in the May/June 1997 issue of *Airport Magazine*, "FAA's Contract Tower Program: Everybody Wins," does a fine job of detailing the benefits of contracting out Level I air traffic control towers. The problem is, the story doesn't so much as hint at opinions on the other side of the coin—the disadvantages of privatization.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) is opposed to contracting out, a product of recent efforts to reinvent government. Opponents of contracting out believe service is decreased and cost savings (if they do exist) are at the expense of public safety. We do not believe in a bottom line orientation over service, safety and quality.

The article states, "Cost savings for towers under private operation have been substantial—almost half of what it costs the FAA to run a control tower." This contrasts with several General Accounting Office studies showing that contracting out of federal services is often more expensive.

Contract controllers also don't have to follow all the air traffic control work rules and agreements, meaning the tower can operate with fewer people. Here is where the cost saving will be realized. But take into consideration that these fewer people are working longer hours, with a higher fatigue level and for lower pay. Look at what happened at Indiana's Monroe County Airport when Midwest Air Traffic Control Service, a private contractor, took it over February 1, 1997. Midwest reduced the two controllers to one. But it didn't stop there. The controller was also placed in charge of overseeing tower operation and maintenance, work previously done by the FAA manager.

Although NATCA is opposed to contracting out of additional air traffic control towers, if privatization does occur, NATCA will work to fight for the safety of the flying public and the rights of these controllers. We are involved in efforts which will allow NATCA to represent controllers working in contract towers to protect private employees like the controller at Monroe County Airport.

Sources in the article state safety has improved as a result of contracting out of air traffic control services. NATCA finds this an irresponsible and ill-informed statement. The FAA conducts a rigorous training program that could last up to three years, as is the case at most facilities. When compared to the minimal instruction at contract facilities, the difference is frightening. Midwest requires controllers to satisfy a maximum of 70 hours of training. The minimum is 18. NATCA believes this training deficiency definitely reduces the margin of safety.

The article mentioned a newly formed organization, the U.S. Contract Tower Association, wants to work with involved groups, one of them being NATCA. USCTA desires all affected organizations to know there is a forum available to discuss merits of the contract tower program. NATCA believes the negatives outweigh the so-called *merits* and we would be more than happy to discuss our views with USCTA. Our commitment to service, safety for the millions of passengers who fly

each day and to the more than 14,000 federal air traffic controllers will not allow us to sit back and allow privatization of FAA control towers to continue—not without a fight. Not without the American public knowing the truth that public safety positions—police officers, firefighters and air traffic controllers—are in the public's interest and are, therefore, inherently governmental. Please let us not sacrifice safety and quality of services in favor of cost incentives.

Mike McNally,  
Executive Vice President  
NATCA

*(Editor's note: The following reply was sent by Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of AAAE and the executive director of USCTA.)*

AAAE and the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) respect the NATCA viewpoint, but the response does not accurately reflect the positive outcomes of this program. The FAA Contract Tower Program has blossomed because it provides an identifiable, important aviation safety enhancement, it is cost-effective and it has a demonstrated, proven track record at small communities across the nation. Moreover, the contract tower workforce is primarily drawn from seasoned, highly experienced former FAA and military controllers or retirees—many with NATCA credentials. Furthermore, FAA subjects all controller workforce candidates—including contract tower controllers—to a rigorous training and certification process. NATCA officials have even said that contract towers may ultimately provide a valuable pool of candidates for the FAA controller workforce.

As to the question of cost and cost savings, the facts again are clear. The federal/local partnership through the Federal Contract Tower Program permits operation of a Level I tower for about 50 percent of what it costs the federal government to operate a facility. As a result, almost \$30 million annually in budget savings are possible once all the Level I towers are contracted out. Citing anecdotal evidence about isolated workplace business practices that seemingly compromise safety for cost savings is a predictable, tactical convenience. The exemplary safety record at contract tower facilities is well-proven and persuasive.

NATCA, in its response, mentions formation of the USCTA and our expressed willingness to work with involved groups like NATCA in exchanging views about the merits of the contract tower program. USCTA actually began that process some time ago with NATCA, encouraging cooperative efforts that will permit the Federal Contract Tower Program to remain viable and cost-effective. USCTA and its members really do believe everybody wins if we work together constructively to enhance national aviation system safety by improving the Federal Contract Tower Program.

- Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) noted that, "We must do what we can, with limited resources, to protect pilots and their passengers in our smaller airports."

Numerous aviation associations also have expressed their support for the goals of the USCTA in letters to members of Congress and the administration. Letters have been sent by the National Air Transportation Association, the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, the National Business Aviation Association, the Regional Airline Association, the Cargo Airline Association and ACI-NA.

### **FAA SENDS WARNING NOTICES TO 22 CONTRACT TOWERS**

Twenty-two contract towers have been sent letters by FAA, informing them that they have until the end of 1998 to meet the agency's b/c criteria or face loss of federal funding.

A location meets the b/c criteria when the benefits of an operation equal or exceed the costs of an operation, as expressed by a b/c ratio of 1.0 or greater.

Towers that were sent notification letters are: Tuscaloosa Municipal, (Ala.), Phoenix Goodyear Municipal (Ariz.), Salinas Municipal (Calif.), Whiteman (Calif.), Southwest Georgia Regional (Ga.), Pocatello Regional (Idaho), Southern Illinois (Ill.), Williamson County Regional (Ill.), Hutchinson Municipal (Kan.), Phillip Billard Municipal (Kan.), Alexandria Esler Regional (La.), Joplin Regional (Mo.), Kinston Regional (N.C.), Central Nebraska Regional (Neb.), Lea County/Hobbs (N.M.), Oneida County (N.Y.), Grand Stand (S.C.), Greenville Downtown (S.C.), Olympia (Wash.), Kenosha Regional (Wis.), Lawrence J. Timmerman (Wis.) and Greenbriar Valley (W.Va.).

### **NTSB INVESTIGATES MIDAIR COLLISION NEAR CHICAGO'S MEIGS FIELD**

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the July 19 midair collision of a Cessna 172 and a Beechcraft Bonanza near Chicago's Meigs Field that resulted in seven deaths. Meigs has an FAA contract tower.

Initially, pilot error is being studied as a possible cause of the accident.

According to accounts of the accident, the two aircraft were flying at between 300 and 500 feet when the collision occurred. The Bonanza had been cleared to land at Meigs from the south, heading north, and the Cessna had flown past Meigs, turned and was heading back to the airport when the accident took place. The weather was reported to be clear and both

aircraft were operating under VFR conditions. First reports said the pilot of the Cessna failed to update the aircraft's position to comply with FAR 91.113 (right of way) and failed to maintain vigilance in a VFR environment, especially that area, which has numerous high density VFR traffic warnings in the charts.

The tower at the recently reopened Meigs is operated under a contract with Midwest ATC. According to preliminary information, FAA indicated no fault on the performance of the controller and did not recommend decertification of the controller.

However, following the accident, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) issued a statement questioning the staffing levels at contract towers and called on Congress to immediately halt the contract tower program. NATCA Executive Vice President Mike McNally said the union's two major issues concerning contract towers are staffing and the amount of training received by the controllers.

USCTA issued a statement underscoring that the contract tower program is a cost-effective way to enhance safety at smaller airports. "The FAA contract tower program has been in place since 1982 and is providing air traffic control services to 135 non-radar VFR airports that might not otherwise have a control tower."

Prior to the accident at Meigs, NTSB Chairman Jim Hall wrote that his agency supports the contract tower concept "and our staff believes that contract facilities are capable of providing the support and expertise necessary to meet the demands of Level I visual flight rules airports."

NTSB Vice Chairman Bob Francis, interviewed by USCTA Executive Director Spencer Dickerson on July 25 as part of the Airport News and Training Network (ANTN) news show, discussed the Meigs accident. He commented, "I spend a lot of my time talking about cooperation and partnership between the industry and government. The contract tower program is a perfect example of this type of partnership and is enormously important. The contract tower program is an area where the FAA, airports and the industry are cooperating and working together effectively."

### **AAAE/ USCTA MEMBERS APPROVE CONTRACT TOWER RESOLUTION**

At the AA AE Annual Conference and Exposition in Minneapolis/St. Paul in May, members passed a resolution commending FAA's contract tower program.

The resolution states:

"Whereas, since 1982, the FAA has contracted to  
(continued on back page)

# INTERESTED IN THE FAA CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM?

If so, we have the information you need! The FAA Contract Tower (FCT) Program has been hailed as a program that enhances safety and services to users while reducing their cost to taxpayers. At the latest American Association of Airport Executives/FAA/U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) Federal Contract Tower Program Workshop, July 17-18 in Washington, D.C., FAA headquarters officials, airport executives and ATC representatives gave the most up-to-date information on the FCT program from all perspectives.

This 101-page document offers a summary of the information covered at the workshop, including:

- an overview and update on the FAA contract tower program
- the FCT applicant/candidate process
- FAA contract tower investment criteria
- FAA terminal area forecast
- the role of FAA's evaluations staff in the FCT program
- a case study of the current contract tower at Salina (Kansas) Municipal Airport
- Central Wisconsin Airport air traffic control tower construction costs

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the private sector air traffic control services at a number of low activity Level I visual flight rule (VFR) airports; and

**Whereas**, a total of 135 airports are currently participating in the program at 100 percent federal reimbursement for the operation of their respective towers; and

**Whereas**, the primary advantages of this program, officially named the Federal Contract Tower Program, are aviation safety enhancements, improved ATC efficiencies and cost savings to FAA; and

**Whereas**, this public/private sector partnership has received positive acclaim from FAA, Congress and, most importantly, the users of the aviation system; and

**Whereas**, airports with Level I towers and users universally have expressed strong support for the program, particularly in light of the fact that FAA budget constraints would force the closure of many of these facilities if they were not part of the contract tower

program; and

**Whereas**, to advance aviation safety and enhance the future viability of the contract tower program, the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) Board of Directors authorized the creation of the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA); and

**Whereas**, the purpose of the USCTA is to focus on key aviation safety issues, federal financial matters and operational policy initiatives regarding contract towers, and to ensure that the program is adequately funded in the future;

**Now, therefore, be it resolved** that the American Association of Airport Executives and the U.S. Contract Tower Association strongly encourage the Federal Aviation Administration and the appropriate committees of the U.S. Congress to enhance and strengthen the Federal Contract Tower Program as a cost effective way to increase air transportation safety.”

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