

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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AVIATION ASSOCIATIONS SUPPORT FAA CONTRACT TOWER FUNDING

Six aviation organizations, including AAAE, are urging key lawmakers in Congress to support funding of \$86 million for the regular FAA Federal Contract Tower Program, as well as an additional \$7 million for the contract tower cost-sharing program, in the fiscal year 2005 Department of Transportation budget.

Letters were sent May 3 to Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee; Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), ranking member of the Appropriations Committee; Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), chairman of the transportation appropriations subcommittee; Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), ranking member of the transportation appropriations subcommittee; Rep. Bill Young (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee; Rep. David Obey (R-Wis.), ranking member of the Appropriations Committee; Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.), chairman of transportation appropriations subcommittee, and Rep. John Olver (D-Mass.), ranking member of the transportation appropriations subcommittee.

"Full funding of the (federal contract tower) program in fiscal year 2005 will permit continuation of this important FAA safety program and allow additional non-towered airports and communities with non-federal towers to receive the vital safety benefits of a control tower," the associations said.

The letters noted that 223 smaller airports in 46 states currently participate in FAA's Federal Contract Tower Program, representing 45 percent of all control towers in the country. In addition, federal contract towers handle about 25 percent of all control tower aircraft operations in the U.S., the associations pointed out. They noted that DOT's Inspector General has validated the safety, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the program numerous times, while FAA safety audits have approved the towers. The National Transportation Safety Board also has

FAA ADMINISTRATOR TO SPEAK AT CONTRACT TOWER WORKSHOP

FAA Administrator Marion Blakey will speak at the upcoming FAA/AAAE/USCTA Contract Tower Workshop at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 24, in Washington, D.C.

To register online for the workshop, go to https://www.airportnet.org/depts/meetings/calendar/register1.cfm?meeting_ID=40504.

validated the program, they said.

Other benefits of the federal contract tower program include the use of controllers who meet the identical training and operating standards as FAA controllers, the associations said.

"As a result of this 22-year government/industry partnership, the federal contract tower program (1) enhances aviation safety at smaller airports that in many cases would not have a tower; (2) saves local airports and communities up to \$90 million annually; (3) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users and pilots, and (4) helps small airports with retaining and developing commercial air service and corporate aviation," the associations told lawmakers.

Without the federal contract tower program, FAA bud-
(continued on following page)

CONTRACT TOWER CONSTRUCTION/ EQUIPMENT AIP ELIGIBLE

FAA in August 2003 finalized the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Program Guidance Letter regarding funding of contract tower construction and equipment.

If your airport is interested in using AIP funds for (1) equipment for a contract tower; (2) construction of a new or replacement contract tower, or (3) reimbursement of construction and/or equipment of a contract tower built or equipped since Oct. 1, 1996, you should carefully review this document. It is available on the CTA website at <http://www.airportnet.org/cta>.

get constraints could force the closure of more than 200 towers, or at a minimum, force local communities, aviation users and taxpayers to pay for air traffic safety services, the associations said.

In addition to AAAE, the letters were signed by the Regional Airline Association, Cargo Airline Association, National Business Aviation Association, National Air Transportation Association and National Association of State Aviation Officials.

In related news, in recent weeks AAAE has worked closely with congressional staff, the FAA administrator's staff, and the FAA Contract Tower Program staff to ensure that FAA will fully fund the contract tower program in fiscal year 2004. There had been an effort by some FAA officials to cut contract tower funding during the current fiscal year due to agency budget constraints. As a result of these cooperative efforts, FAA will fully fund the program in fiscal year 2004, including the addition of several non-towered airports to the program.

22 AIRPORTS PARTICIPATE IN CONTRACT TOWER COST-SHARING

Twenty-two facilities were participating in FAA's contract tower cost-sharing program as of May 1, 2004.

They are: King Salmon (Alaska), Laughlin/Bullhead City (Ariz.), Springdale Municipal (Ark.), South Lake Tahoe (Calif.), Macon (Ga.), Muncie (Ind.), Columbus (Ind.), Bloomington (Ind.), Manhattan (Kan.), Garden City (Kan.), Jefferson City (Mo.), Elko (Nev.), Lebanon Municipal (N.H.), Hickory Regional (N.C.), Concord (N.C.), Kinston (N.C.), Stillwater (Okla.), Latrobe (Pa.), Williamsport/Lycoming Co. (Pa.), Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach (S.C.), McKellar-Sipes Regional (Tenn.) and Walla Walla Regional (Wash.).

For information on the contract tower cost-sharing program, contact your FAA regional representative (listed on page 5).

FAA ISSUES BENEFIT/COST PROCESS GUIDELINES

FAA has issued the finalized contract tower program benefit/cost (b/c) guidelines in an effort to help standardize and simplify the agency's b/c process. The agency has run the b/c numbers, which have been sent to all affected airports. For information about the b/c process, contact your FAA representative (listed on page 5)

The procedures and timelines contained in the document were coordinated with AAAE and the U.S. Contract Tower Association.

The document provides:

Fully Funded Towers

FAA's policy office (APO-200) will provide the FCT Program Office by Nov. 15 of every other year the updated benefit/cost (b/c) ratios for all fully funded contract towers.

For regular contract tower airports with revised b/c ratios that continue to be over 1.0, the FAA Contract Tower Program Office will advise the airport sponsor of its revised b/c ratio and that the airport's contract tower will continue in the regular program for full funding.

For regular contract tower airports with revised b/c ratios that are below 1.0, the FAA Contract Tower Program Office will send each of these airport sponsors a letter with the updated b/c ratio and the backup data information used for the b/c calculation.

Included in the letter will be a request for the airport sponsor, if it so desires, to provide, no later than 60 days after receipt of the letter, to the FAA Contract Tower Program Office updated and verifiable data that will be used to calculate the final b/c.

The FAA will provide these airport sponsors the final b/c no later than 60 days after the deadline for the receipt of the new data. The airport sponsor's cost-share portion to operate the tower, based on the final b/c, will become effective on Oct. 1.

Cost Share Towers

FAA's policy office (APO-200) will provide the FAA Contract Tower (FCT) Program Office (ATP-140) by *(continued on page 6)*

**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

Editor..... **Barbara Cook**

Charles M. Barclay, A.A.E.
President, AAAE

J. Spencer Dickerson,
Executive Director, USCTA
Senior Executive Vice President, AAAE
601 Madison Street, S. 400
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 824-0500, Ext. 130
sdickerson@airportnet.org

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Visit our website at <http://www.airportnet.org/cta/>

FAA CONTRACT TOWERS*(223 towers as of May 1, 2004. Towers marked with an asterisk are part of the cost-sharing program.)*

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Bethel	AAL	AK	Burke Lakefront (Cleveland)	AGL	OH
Kenai Municipal	AAL	AK	Ohio State University	AGL	OH
*King Salmon	AAL	AK	Lunken Mun. (Cincinnati)	AGL	OH
Kodiak	AAL	AK	Cuyahoga County (Cleveland)	AGL	OH
Dubuque	ACE	IA	Rapid City Regional	AGL	SD
Forbes Field (Topeka)	ACE	KS	Appleton	AGL	WI
*Garden City	ACE	KS	Central Wisconsin	AGL	WI
Hutchinson Mun.	ACE	KS	Kenosha Municipal	AGL	WI
Johnson Co. Exec.	ACE	KS	Lacrosse	AGL	WI
Philip Billard Mun. (Topeka)	ACE	KS	Rock County (Janesville)	AGL	WI
*Manhattan	ACE	KS	Timmerman (Milwaukee)	AGL	WI
New Century Air Center (Olathe)	ACE	KS	Waukesha County Airport	AGL	WI
Salina Municipal	ACE	KS	Wittman Regional (Oshkosh)	AGL	WI
Columbia	ACE	MO	Bridgeport	ANE	CT
*Jefferson City	ACE	MO	Danbury	ANE	CT
Joplin Regional	ACE	MO	New London (Groton)	ANE	CT
Rosecrans Mem'l (St. Joseph)	ACE	MO	Brainard (Hartford)	ANE	CT
Central Neb. (Grand Island)	ACE	NE	Tweed-New Haven	ANE	CT
Martin State (Baltimore)	AEA	MD	Waterbury/Oxford	ANE	CT
Washington Co. (Hagerstown)	AEA	MD	Barnes Municipal	ANE	MA
Salisbury-Wicomico	AEA	MD	Beverly	ANE	MA
Trenton	AEA	NJ	Hyannis	ANE	MA
Tompkins County	AEA	NY	Lawrence	ANE	MA
Niagara Falls	AEA	NY	Martha's Vineyard	ANE	MA
Oneida County	AEA	NY	New Bedford	ANE	MA
Stewart	AEA	NY	Norwood	ANE	MA
Capital City (Harrisburg)	AEA	PA	Worcester	ANE	MA
Lancaster	AEA	PA	Boire Field (Nashua)	ANE	NH
*Latrobe	AEA	PA	*Lebanon Municipal	ANE	NH
*Williamsport/Lycoming Co.	AEA	PA	Eagle County	ANM	CO
Charlottesville-Albemarle	AEA	VA	Grand Junction	ANM	CO
Lynchburg	AEA	VA	Friedman Memorial (Hailey)	ANM	ID
Greenbrier Valley	AEA	WV	Idaho Falls	ANM	ID
Morgantown	AEA	WV	Lewiston-Nez Perce Co.	ANM	ID
Parkersburg	AEA	WV	Pocatello Municipal	ANM	ID
Wheeling Ohio Co.	AEA	WV	Gallatin Field (Bozeman)	ANM	MT
Bloomington/Normal	AGL	IL	Kalispell	ANM	MT
Decatur	AGL	IL	Missoula	ANM	MT
St. Louis Regional	AGL	IL	Klamath Falls	ANM	OR
So. Illinois/Carbondale	AGL	IL	McNary Field (Salem)	ANM	OR
Waukegan Regional	AGL	IL	Medford	ANM	OR
Williamson County (Marion)	AGL	IL	Pendleton	ANM	OR
*Bloomington	AGL	IN	Redmond	ANM	OR
*Columbus Municipal	AGL	IN	Troutdale (Portland)	ANM	OR
Gary Regional	AGL	IN	Ogden-Hinckley	ANM	UT
*Muncie/Delaware County	AGL	IN	Bellingham Int'l	ANM	WA
Battle Creek	AGL	MI	Felts Field (Spokane)	ANM	WA
Detroit City	AGL	MI	Olympia	ANM	WA
Sawyer	AGL	MI	Renton	ANM	WA
Jackson	AGL	MI	Tacoma Narrows	ANM	WA
Anoka (Minneapolis)	AGL	MN	*Walla Walla Regional	ANM	WA
Minot	AGL	ND	Yakima	ANM	WA
Bolton Field (Columbus)	AGL	OH	Cheyenne	ANM	WY
			Jackson Hole	ANM	WY

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Dothan	ASO	AL
Brookley (Mobile)	ASO	AL
Tuscaloosa Municipal	ASO	AL
Albert Whitted (St. Petersburg)	ASO	FL
Boca Raton	ASO	FL
Cecil Field	ASO	FL
Gainesville	ASO	FL
Hollywood	ASO	FL
Craig (Jacksonville)	ASO	FL
Key West	ASO	FL
Kissimmee	ASO	FL
Lakeland Municipal	ASO	FL
Melbourne	ASO	FL
Naples	ASO	FL
Opa Locka (Miami)	ASO	FL
Page Field	ASO	FL
Panama City/Bay Co.	ASO	FL
Pompano Beach	ASO	FL
St. Augustine	ASO	FL
Stuart/Witham	ASO	FL
Titusville/Cocoa	ASO	FL
Athens Municipal	ASO	GA
Fulton County	ASO	GA
Gwinnett County	ASO	GA
*Macon	ASO	GA
McCollum	ASO	GA
SW Georgia/Albany-Dougherty	ASO	GA
Valdosta Regional	ASO	GA
Barkley Regional (Paducah)	ASO	KY
Owensboro/Daviess Co.	ASO	KY
Golden Triangle Regional	ASO	MS
Greenville Municipal	ASO	MS
Hawkins Field (Jackson)	ASO	MS
Meridian/Key Field	ASO	MS
Tupelo Regional	ASO	MS
*Concord	ASO	NC
*Kinston	ASO	NC
New Bern	ASO	NC
Smith Reynolds (Winston-Salem)	ASO	NC
*Hickory Regional	ASO	NC
Isla Grande	ASO	Puerto Rico
*Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach	ASO	SC
Greenville Downtown	ASO	SC
Hilton Head Airport	ASO	SC
Millington	ASO	TN
Smyrna	ASO	TN
*McKeller-Sipes (Jackson)	ASO	TN
Henry E. Rohlsen (St. Croix)	ASO	Virgin Islands
Fayetteville	ASW	AR
Northwest Arkansas Regional	ASW	AR
*Springdale	ASW	AR
Texarkana Mun./Webb Field	ASW	AR
Acadiana Regional	ASW	LA
Chennault	ASW	LA
Houma	ASW	LA
Alexandria	ASW	LA
Shreveport Downtown	ASW	LA

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Farmington Municipal	ASW	NM
Lea County/Hobbs	ASW	NM
Santa Fe Co. Mun.	ASW	NM
Ardmore Municipal	ASW	OK
Enid Woodring Mun.	ASW	OK
Lawton Municipal	ASW	OK
Univ. of Oklahoma/Westheimer	ASW	OK
*Stillwater	ASW	OK
Wiley Post	ASW	OK
Brownsville Int'l	ASW	TX
Denton Municipal Airport	ASW	TX
Easterwood	ASW	TX
Grand Prairie	ASW	TX
Laredo International	ASW	TX
McAllen	ASW	TX
McKinney Municipal	ASW	TX
Redbird	ASW	TX
Rio Grande Valley (Harlingen)	ASW	TX
San Angelo	ASW	TX
Stinson Municipal (San Antonio)	ASW	TX
Sugar Land	ASW	TX
Tyler	ASW	TX
Waco TSTC	ASW	TX
Chandler	AWP	AZ
Flagstaff Pulliam	AWP	AZ
Glendale	AWP	AZ
Goodyear (Phoenix)	AWP	AZ
*Laughlin/Bullhead City	AWP	AZ
Mesa/Williams Gateway	AWP	AZ
Ryan (Tucson)	AWP	AZ
Chico	AWP	CA
Fullerton	AWP	CA
Hawthorne	AWP	CA
Mather (Sacramento)	AWP	CA
Modesto	AWP	CA
Oxnard	AWP	CA
Palmdale	AWP	CA
Ramona Airport	AWP	CA
Redding Municipal	AWP	CA
Riverside	AWP	CA
Sacramento Executive	AWP	CA
Salinas Municipal	AWP	CA
San Carlos	AWP	CA
Brown Field (San Diego)	AWP	CA
San Luis Obispo	AWP	CA
Santa Maria	AWP	CA
*South Lake Tahoe	AWP	CA
Vandenberg Air Force Base	AWP	CA
Victorville	AWP	CA
Whiteman (Los Angeles)	AWP	CA
William J. Fox (Lancaster)	AWP	CA
Agana	AWP	Guam
Kalaeloa	AWP	HI
Kona/Keahole	AWP	HI
Lihue	AWP	HI
Molokai	AWP	HI
*Elko	AWP	NV
Henderson (Las Vegas)	AWP	NV
Saipan International	AWP	MP

FAA CONTRACT**Alaskan Region**

222 W. 7th Ave., Number 14
Anchorage, AK 99513

Hank Williams, (POC)
AAL-510
(907) 271-5828
(907) 271-2850 fax

Great Lakes Region

O'Hare Lake Office Center
2300 East Devon Ave.
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Lea Bell, (POC) AGL-510.3
(847) 294-7556
(847) 294-8101 fax

Southern Region

1701 Columbia Ave.
College Park, GA 30337-2745

Rhonda Phillips, (POC)
ASO-510
(404) 305-5530
(404) 305-5523 fax

Central Region

901 Locust St.
Kansas City, MO 64106-2641

Greg Golden (POC)
ACE-510B
(816) 329-2516
816-329-2575 fax

New England Region

12 New England Executive Park
Burlington, MA 01803

Bill Tobin, (POC) ANE-510
(781) 238-7515
(781) 238-7598 fax

TOWER REGIONAL**Southwest Region**

2601 Meacham Blvd.
Fort Worth, TX 76137-4298

Susan Ruddy, ASW-510
(817) 222-5576
(817) 222-5979 fax

Eastern Region

JFK International Airport
Fitzgerald Federal Building
Jamaica, NY 114324

Jerry Mazza (POC) AEA-510
(516) 683-2869
(718) 995-5692 fax

Kathy Moclair-Shea, AEA-510
(718) 553-4510/4513
(718) 995-5692 fax

Northwest Mountain Region

1601 Lind Ave., SW
Renton, WA 98055-4056

Wes Price, (POC) ANM-510.1
(425) 227-2522
(425) 227-1510 fax

POINTS OF CONTACT:**Western-Pacific Region**

15000 Aviation Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90009

Jessie Shapiro, (POC) AWP-510
(310) 725-6511
(310) 725-6829 fax

FAA Headquarters

Contract Services Branch
800 Independence Ave., S.W., Rm. 635,
Washington, DC 20591

Harold Thomas
Manager
202/267-9315
(202) 267-5305 fax

May 1 of every other year the updated benefit/cost (b/c) ratios for all cost-share contract towers.

For contract tower cost-share airports with revised b/c ratios that are over 1.0, the FCT program office will advise the airport sponsor of its revised b/c ratio and that, effective no later than Oct. 1, the airport's contract tower will be in the regular program for full funding.

For contract tower cost-share airports that have revised b/c ratios that have increased but are still below 1.0, the FCT program office will advise the airport sponsor of its revised b/c ratio and that the revised cost-share portion for the airport will be effective no later than Oct. 1.

For contract tower cost-share airports with revised b/c ratios that have decreased, the FAA Contract Tower Program Office will send each of these airport sponsors a letter with the updated b/c ratio and the backup data information used for the b/c ratio calculation. Included in the letter will be a request for the airport sponsor, if it so desires, to provide, no later than 60 days after receipt of the letter, to the FCT program office updated and verifiable data that will be used to calculate the final b/c ratio. The FAA will provide these airport sponsors the final b/c ratio no later than 30 days after the deadline for the receipt of new data. The airport sponsor's revised cost-share portion to operate the tower, based on the final b/c ratio, will become effective no later than six months after receipt of the initial b/c ratio.

FOUR AIRPORTS JOIN FAA'S CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

Four airports that now are part of FAA's Contract Tower Program have brand new towers. They are Ramona (Calif.) Airport, Denton (Texas) Municipal Airport, Golden Triangle (Miss.) Regional Airport, and Hilton Head (S.C.) Airport.



Denton Municipal Airport (above): The tower opened May 3, 2004, with a ceremony that included Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), who spoke on the importance of airports to the nation's economy. Locally elected officials also attended. The airport hosted an aircraft aer-

In this issue, the USCTA newsletter features the Denton and Ramona facilities. The other towers will be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

obatic demonstration to celebrate the occasion.

Denton Municipal handles an estimated 113,000 operations annually. The tower cost \$1.1 million to construct and the airport is currently awaiting federal reimbursement of funds for radio and equipment costs.

Mark Nelson, C.M., director of airport and transit operations for the city of Denton, commented that FAA's Contract Tower Program will allow the city to shift the financial burden of controller salaries to FAA, which allows the city to afford the tower. "The tower will enhance safety on the field, which will encourage enhancement of airport development," he said.



Ramona Airport

(left): The tower was dedicated Dec. 6, 2003, with a fly-in pancake breakfast to mark the occasion. More than 50 aircraft arrived for the event, which drew a total of 1,000 people.

Ramona Airport has averaged approximately 125,000 operations annually for the past 10 years. Design and construction of the new tower cost \$2.1 million and the facility was built and equipped entirely with local funds.

Airport Manager Richard Selinger said the airport, its users and the County of San Diego "will greatly benefit from the air traffic control services provided by federally contracted air traffic controllers." He said the airport has had two midair collisions during the past 10 years. "Our airport is the oldest air attack base in the country for aerial wildfire suppression," he said. "The devastating wildfires in San Diego County last year demonstrated the need for air traffic control services at Ramona Airport. Being included in the federal contract tower program will be instrumental in helping fight wildfires in Southern California."

HIGHLIGHTS LISTED FROM WILLIE CARD AWARD NOMINATIONS-2003

The 2003 winner of the Willie F. Card Contract Tower Service Award was the Lewiston-Nez Perce County (Idaho) Regional Airport FAA Contract Tower, operated by controllers from Serco Management Services.

The winner of the 2004 Willie F. Card award will be announced during the upcoming FAA Contract Tower Workshop, to be held May 24-25 in Washington, D.C.

Nominees for the award in 2003 and a short summary of their of their qualifications for the award are listed below:

—**The Lewiston-Pez Perce County (Idaho) Regional Airport (Serco Management Services):** The contract tower controls airspace in portions of Idaho, Washington and Oregon. The tower has been error free since 1995 and received a 100 percent rating during its last (1999) full facility evaluation.

The tower staff, headed by manager Wendy Fredrickson, has won multiple endorsements from airport tenants and users for a high level of professionalism and cooperation. Horizon Air's Customer Service Manager offered this assessment: "I have heard numerous compliments from our Horizon flight crews over the years on the outstanding professionalism given by the tower staff...they have been wonderful and great team players, always looking out for our best interests at hand."

Fredrickson and her staff were cited repeatedly for participating on a regular basis in Experimental Aircraft Association gatherings, airport commission meetings and FAA safety seminars. In addition, the tower staff provides outreach briefings on air traffic services to classes at the local colleges and universities and has incorporated airport business tours into airfield familiarization training for new controllers. The tower crew received a certificate of appreciation from the Civil Air Patrol for outstanding assistance both in exercise and real search and rescue missions.

—**Tucson Airport Authority's Ryan Airfield (Serco Management Services):** A GA reliever airport west of Tucson, Ryan Airfield has had an FAA contract tower since April 1997. Airport users stated that controller actions repeatedly have averted emergencies while controllers demonstrate a proactive dedication to safety, service and professionalism. Controllers work closely with the flying schools and instructors to ensure that students learn the proper way of operating in and out of the airport. Community outreach is another hallmark of the Ryan Tower, with Air Traffic Manager Al Robles working with pilot groups and other airport users. Robles also was cited as being active in the planning and coordination of numerous capital improvement and other construction projects at the airport. According to Juan Leon, owner of airport tenant Southwest Avionics, "The Ryan controllers are always looking for ways to help with avionics problems. Many times I've called to talk to them about radio problems when a customer can't give a good description of what happened. They're always helpful in those situations, and have often been able to save me troubleshooting time." FAA has recognized the tower for having had no operational errors for the past five years.

—**Redding (Calif.) Municipal Airport (Serco Management Services):** A GA airport located in northern California, Redding also regularly handles aircraft from Benton Airport, located six miles to the north, which includes California Highway Patrol and med-evac helicopters. The airport has participated in FAA's Contract Tower Program since 1999. In addition, Redding Tower Manager Scott Wilson and controllers were cited for going out of their way to support tenants and form a good relationship with pilots using the airport. During a capital improvement program at the airport that included total reconstruction of the main runway and overlaying most of the taxiways, the tower personnel were commended for working in close cooperation with the contractors and airport users to uphold safety and minimize the impact of the construction. The tower's cooperation during the airport's bi-annual airshow builds community support for aviation and the airport. Since national security concerns have affected community visits to the tower, Wilson now participates in school Career Day events and other activities to promote aviation.

—**Williams Gateway (Ariz.) Airport (Serco Management Services):** An FAA contract tower airport since 1997, Williams Gateway is located in Mesa, a suburb south of Phoenix. A former Air Force base, Williams now serves a wide variety of uses, from housing two U.S. Air Marshal Service aircraft to serving as a base for Boeing Aircraft to retrofit Air Force T-38 and Army AH-64 Apache helicopters. In addition, the airport has the only instrument landing system available in central Arizona for flight training. Despite this mix of traffic and the volume of operations handled at the airport, the tower was recently recognized by FAA for having had no operational errors in the past five years. The staff at Gateway Tower uses the motto Team Gateway to describe their practice of constantly working beyond what is expected of them. ATC Manager Ron Pierce is well known to airport tenants and users through his active participation in airport and airport user events. Due to controllers' safety and customer service records, Serco awarded Gateway Tower the "Tower of the Year" award in 2002. The tower was nominated for the Arizona Safety Advisory Groups' Air Traffic Facility of the Year award for 2002.

—**Woodring (Okla.) Regional Airport (Midwest ATC Services):** Recently cited by FAA for 10 years of service without an operational error, Woodring's controllers were praised for their outstanding individual contributions to this safety record. Through the use of an "open door" policy, in which controllers work with airport users, the tower has developed a reputation for cooperation. Mesa Airlines Operations Manager Deanne Molyneaux wrote that the expertise and professional work ethics of

the Woodring controllers “have been of great help to me in establishing our office” at the airport. Molyneaux added that, “When our pilots have a problem, one call to the tower is all it takes to eliminate delays, file flight plan changes, amendments, update NOTAMS, supply weather observations and answer questions about anything aviation related. Other terminals have problems when taking over operations contracts, as we did, but the Woodring Tower personnel wouldn’t let that happen to us. They stepped right in, when asked, and made sure that our operations have been smooth.”

—**St. Augustine (Fla.) Airport (Robinson Aviation):**

Prior to the control tower opening on Oct. 3, 2002, as a participant in FAA’s Contract Tower Program, St. Augustine Tower Manager David Knight and his team toured the airfield to identify all the users and their locations. During this tour, safety concerns were identified and later resolved, with some changes that improved safety, such as repainting surface markings and removing nearby trees that blocked visibility of Taxiway Bravo from the tower. Further, the tower team developed a comprehensive airfield driver training program. As part of the run-up to a controlled airfield, Knight’s team met with user groups and identified key changes that would take place when the tower opened. Since the tower opened, the controllers have conducted classes with the Florida Aviation Career Training School to reduce unsafe practices, and have visited other airports to communicate with pilots who may use St. Augustine Airport in the future. The tower staff is credited with transforming what was an airport with airfield safety problems into a facility that is safe and efficient.

—**Tupelo (Miss.) Regional Airport (Robinson Aviation):** This airport has experienced unprecedented growth in traffic, corporate business and operations in recent years. The Tupelo tower opened in September 1999 in a temporary building, with controllers assisting with the construction. Since that time, the monthly traffic count has risen from 47,307 operations to 71,095 operations for calendar year 2002. Tower personnel have established a runway safety program to include training for airport familiarization, taxi routes, movement/non-movement areas, light gun signals and emergency alert procedures. Further, the tower manager conducted formal airport familiarization training for all members of the Tupelo Fire Department, the Hazardous Materials Team, the Belden Volunteer Fire Department and many members of the tupelo Police Department and its Tactical Response Team. The tower staff developed a familiarization/phraseology guide for pilot flight instructions and received superior results on FAA’s Full Facility Evaluation of the tower. In addition, the controllers devoted time and energy for the design, development and construction of the new control

tower, which opened in February 2002. As part of the move, controllers volunteered their off-duty time to paint and assist with console construction for the facility.

—**W.K. Kellogg (Mich.) Airport (Midwest Air Traffic Control Services):** Kellogg Airport became a participant in FAA’s Contract Tower Program in 1997, and during the following five-year period operations at the facility increased by 47 percent. Despite the sharp rise in operations and the complex fleet of aircraft utilizing the airspace, Midwest controllers have maintained an excellent safety record. As of Sept 30, 2002, the facility reached the milestone of at least three years without an operational error, according to FAA. Further, in 2000, ATC Manager Phil Miner received Midwest’s Facility Manager of the Year award. Miner participates regularly in safety meetings with airport users, tenant meetings, public meetings and other events to foster open and effective communications. Airport users and tenants, in support of the tower’s nomination for the Willie Card award, cited the controllers’ safe, efficient and courteous handling of aircraft. One GA repair station tenant wrote that, “Exemplary customer service is fundamental in all aspects of the W.K. Kellogg tower operations.” Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation said it would not have achieved its success in training student pilots without the support of the controllers at Kellogg Airport.

—**Kissimmee (Fla.) Gateway Airport (Robinson Aviation):** Kissimmee’s FAA contract tower opened in 1997, causing an increase in airport use by business jet aircraft and bringing more than \$3 million in private development on the airport over the past two years. The city of Kissimmee’s Key to the City Award was presented to the controllers in May of 2002 for their proactive efforts that have resulted in improved airport safety and economic development in the region. Orlando Flight Training, the largest single user of ATC services at the airport, endorsed the controllers as “second to none” and known for being “more than willing to be of educational benefit to our aspiring pilots.” If FAA controllers could spend some time at the Kissimmee tower during their training, the entire ATC system would benefit, wrote another airport tenant. Other pilots and airport tenants praised the tower staff for understanding, flexibility and dedication that have resulted in smooth operations.

—**Trenton Mercer (N.J.) Airport (Robinson Aviation):** Averaging well over 130,000 operations annually over the past several years, Trenton Mercer controllers handle a complex mix of scheduled air carrier, corporate aviation, civilian and military helicopters, general aviation and several busy flight schools. The airport is located in the busy New York-Philadelphia corridor. Recently, the tower was presented FAA’s “None in a Million Award”

for completing one million error-free operations. The tower was featured in the Teterboro Aviation & Business Journal in October 2002 for its outstanding customer service. Further, the tower was awarded a plaque by the Air Force One flight crew for outstanding service during a Presidential visit to the airport in September 2002. Tower Manager Jim Pate supported the Philadelphia Flight Standards District Office as a featured speaker at five accident prevention seminars. The tower staff also distributed a guide to local air traffic procedures to pilots who attended the briefing and supplied the guide electronically to all local flight schools to aid in their training.

—**Martin County Witham Field (Fla.) Airport (Robinson Aviation):** A participant in FAA's Contract Tower Program since July 1, 1995, Martin County controllers have had no operational errors and have maintained a Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Index score of 980-996 points out of a possible 1,000 for three consecutive years. As part of their proactive approach to safety, controllers attended numerous workshops to provide technical information on air traffic regulations and procedures, and attended a county commissioners' Radar Workshop to provide technical expertise to obtain a radar display for the tower. Controllers maintain an intensive liaison program with all airport-based tenants and organizations and conduct familiarization tours for instructor/student pilots. Controllers, frequently on their time off, serve as guest speakers to local and national organizations on air traffic procedures and the changes and trends that are taking place in aviation. Further, controllers conduct training classes for vehicle operators who work at the local FBOs on rules and procedures for operating on the airport movement area.

CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION GAINS NEW MEMBERS

New members of the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) since March 1, 2004, are: Wheeling-Ohio County Airport (W. Va.), Hawthorne Municipal Airport (Calif.), Stinson Municipal Airport (San Antonio, Texas), Millington Municipal Airport (Tenn.), Meridian Regional Airport (Miss.), Dubuque Regional Airport (Iowa), Martha's Vineyard Airport (Mass.), Infinite Computer Technologies and National Air Traffic Services (U.K.).

Spencer Dickerson, senior executive vice president of AAE, is executive director of USCTA.

Consultants to USCTA are Linda Hall Daschle and Bert Randall of Baker, Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Burkowitz; Patrick McCann of McCann Capitol Advocates, and Larry Barnett of AB Management Associates.

Tim Rogers, A.A.E., executive director of the Salina (Kan.) Airport Authority, is chair of the 2004 Policy

Board. Other members are: Bryan Elliott, A.A.E., Charlottesville, Va.; Ted Soliday, Naples, Fla.; Steve Stockam, Joplin, Mo.; Michael Covalt, Flagstaff, Ariz.; Lynn Kusy, Mesa, Ariz.; Walt Strong, C.M., Norman, Okla.; Russ Chandler, Jacksonville, Fla.; Michael Feeley, Spinks, Texas; Russ Johnson, Manhattan, Kan.; Jack Schelter, A.A.E., Phoenix, Ariz.; Bill Gatchell, C.M., Hobbs, N.M.; Jerry O'Sullivan, Greenbrier, W. Va.; Richard Baird, Hailey, Idaho; Robert Bryant, Salisbury, Md.; Steve Harvey, Chennault, La.; Scott Carr, Titusville, Fla.; Scott Driver, Tucson, Ariz.; Cliff Nash, Tunica, Miss. Ex-officio members are Shane Cordes, Midwest ATC; Pete Dumont, Serco Management Services; Will Mowdy, RVA, and Brian Lally, PBS&J.

The following are members of the association: Hawaii Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Aviation, Mobile Downtown Airport (Ala.), City of Phoenix Aviation Department (Ariz.), Chandler Municipal Airport (Ariz.), Mesa/Williams Gateway (Ariz.), Flagstaff (Ariz.) Pulliam Airport, Laughlin/Bullhead City, (Ariz.) International, Tucson (Ariz.) Airport Authority, Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, Hawthorne Municipal 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.), San Diego (Calif.) Brown Field, Redding (Calif.) Municipal Airport, Salinas (Calif.) Municipal Airport, Santa Maria Public Airport District (Calif.), Front Range Airport (Colo.), Greeley-Weld County Airport (Colo.), Boca Raton Airport (Fla.), Jacksonville/Craig (Fla.) Airport, Kissimmee (Fla.), Martin County Stuart/Whitham Airport (Fla.), Miami-Dade County Aviation Department (Fla.) (Opa Locka Airport), Naples Municipal Airport (Fla.), New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport (Fla.), Titusville-Cocoa Airport (Fla.), Page Field (Fla.), Lakeland (Fla.) Linder Regional Airport, St. Augustine Airport (Fla.), Ormond Beach Municipal (Fla.), Southwest Georgia Regional Airport, Cobb County-McCollum Field Airport (Ga.), Gwinnett County Airport (Ga.), Valdosta Regional Airport (Ga.), Friedman Memorial Airport (Idaho), Idaho Falls Regional Airport (Idaho), Pocatello Regional Airport (Idaho), Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport (Idaho), Decater (Ill.), Waukegan Regional Airport (Ill.), Quincy (Ill.) Municipal Airport, Southern Illinois Airport, St. Louis Regional Airport (Ill.), Williamson County Regional Airport (Ill.), Delaware County Airport (Muncie, Ind.), Columbus Municipal Airport (Ind.), Dubuque Regional Airport (Iowa), Johnson County Municipal Airport (Kan.), Metro Topeka Airport Authority (Kan.), Salina Municipal Airport (Kan.), Manhattan (Kan.) Regional Airport, Garden City Regional Airport (Kan.), Paducah Airport (Ky.), Shreveport Downtown Airport (La.),

Alexandria International Airport (La.), Chennault International Airport (La.), Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico (Md.) Regional Airport, Martin State Airport (Md.), Martha's Vineyard Airport (Mass.), Worcester (Mass.) Regional Airport, Metropolitan Airports Commission (Anoka, Minn.), St. Cloud Regional Airport (Minn.), W.K. Kellogg Airport (Mich.), Sawyer International Airport (Mich.), Jackson Municipal (Miss.), Meridian Regional Airport (Miss.), Olive Branch Municipal Airport (Miss.), Stennis International Airport (Miss.), Tupelo Regional Airport (Miss.), Columbia Regional Airport (Mo.), Joplin Regional Airport (Mo.), Jefferson City Memorial Airport (Mo.), Rosecrans Memorial Airport (Mo.), Glacier Park (Mont.) International, Gallatin Field (Mont.), Missoula (Mont.), Central Nebraska Regional Airport, Elko Municipal Airport (Nev.), Henderson (Nev.) Executive Airport, Nashua (N.H.) Airport Authority, Lea County Airports (N.M.), Double Eagle II Airport (N.M.), Concord Regional Airport (N.C.), Craven Regional Airport (N.C.), Hickory Regional Airport (N.C.), Smith Reynolds Airport (N.C.), Bolton Field (Ohio), Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport (Ohio), Cincinnati Municipal-Lunken Airport (Ohio), Ohio State University Airport (Ohio), Ardmore Municipal Airport (Okla.), Max Westheimer Field (Okla.), Stillwater Municipal Airport (Okla.), Wiley Post Airport (Okla.), Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Oregon Department of Aviation, Redmond Municipal Airport (Ore.), Arnold Palmer Regional Airport (Latrobe, Pa.), Capital City Airport (Pa.), Greenville Downtown Airport (S.C.), Rapid City Regional Airport (S.D.), Millington Municipal Airport (Tenn.), Smyrna Rutherford County (Tenn.), Jackson Madison County Airport (Tenn.), Arlington Municipal Airport (Texas), Denton Municipal (Texas), Ellington Field (Texas), Galveston Municipal Airport (Texas), Laredo International Airport (Texas), Harlingen Valley International (Texas), Brownsville/South Padre Island International (Texas), Grand Prairie Municipal Airport (Texas), Grayson County Airport (Texas), Collin County Regional (Texas), Spinks Airport (Texas), Stinson Municipal Airport (Texas), Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport (Va.), Lynchburg Regional Airport (Va.), Spokane (Wash.), Walla Walla Municipal Airport (Wash.), Olympia Airport (Wash.), Greenbrier Valley Airport (W.Va.), Wheeling-Ohio County Airport (W.Va.), Chippewa Valley (Wis.) Regional Airport, Kenosha Regional Airport (Wis.). Milwaukee Timmerman (Wis.) Airport, LaCrosse Municipal (Wis.), Central Wisconsin Airport (Wis.), Outagamie County Regional Airport (Wis.), Waukesha County Airport (Wis.), Cheyenne Airport (Wyo.), Jackson Hole Airport (Wyo.), CI2 Aviation, Engineering & Installation Services (EIS), Northrup Grumman ES Denro Systems, Lockheed Martin TSS, Marsh USA, Midwest Air Traffic

Control Services Inc., PBS&J, Quadrex Associates, Raytheon Company-Air Traffic Management Systems, Robinson Aviation (RVA), Serco Management Services, SolaCom Technologies, Stonefield LLC, Washington Consulting Group, Weather Services International, William E. Payne & Assoc., Infinite Computer Technologies and National Air Traffic Services (U.K.).

CONTRACTOR NEWS

ROBINSON AVIATION AWARDED CONTRACT BY STATE OF VIRGINIA

Robinson Aviation (RVA) has been awarded a contract by the Virginia Department of Aviation to provide general aviation security consulting services, including aviation security plans (ASP) and security audits for eight airports, manuals for the development of ASPs and guidance for conducting the audits.

At the option of the purchasing agency, the contract calls for RVA to provide training to airport security managers throughout the state on ASPs and audit techniques. The goal is to ensure that each general aviation airport in the state achieves the appropriate level of security without placing undue financial and administrative burdens on the airport sponsor. There are 58 general aviation airports in Virginia that will benefit from this initiative.

In other news, RVA:

—has been selected by the Ukrainian State Air Traffic Service Enterprise (UkSATSE) to perform a feasibility study for a Regional CNS/ATM Transition Plan. The plan will cover the aviation sectors of Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

—announced the company has been selected by the Department of State Inspection for Flight Safety Oversight of Uzbekistan to perform a feasibility study for civil aviation security in that country. The program will establish specific program and technological requirements for five Uzbekistan international airports.

Keep in touch with USCTA news and upcoming events by visiting www.airportnet.org/cta.

The website features a discussion forum, as well as our newsletter, press releases and information on FAA's contract tower program. Membership information is available by calling Spencer Dickerson at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 130, or e-mailing sdickerson@airportnet.org.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT FAA'S CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

Contract Air Traffic Control Towers: A Competitive Sourcing Success Story

The Reason Foundation, April 2004

Smaller FAA control towers have increasingly been competitively sourced to private contractors over the past 20 years. Studies by the DOT Inspector General have consistently found that contract towers cost only one-third as much to operate as comparable FAA towers of the same activity level, but "are comparable to the quality and safety of FAA-operated towers." Therefore, the Inspector General has recommended that competitive sourcing be extended to the remaining 71 VFR towers.

The Contract Tower program began in 1982, to help rebuild the system after the illegal strike by air traffic controllers. As of late 2003, there were 219 towers in the program. All are "visual flight rules" (VFR) towers, without radar control of flights.

Contract towers have been supported by administrations of both parties. Of the 219 towers in the program, 116 were added by the Clinton administration. In 1993, Sen. Frank Lautenberg lauded the program on the Senate floor (though bitterly opposing it during the battle over FAA reauthorization in 2003).

Though most contract towers serve general aviation (GA) airports, several dozen commercial service airports are served by Contract Towers. Among them are Kong (HI), Trenton (NJ), Jackson Hole (WY), Charlottesville (VA), Bozeman (MT), Gainesville (FL), Dubuque (IA), San Luis Obispo (CA), Hyannis (MA), and Laredo (TX).

The U.S. military has long used private contractors for control tower operations. Among the well-known bases with contract towers are Ft. Leavenworth (KS), Rickenbacker (OH), Langley (VA), Holloman (NM), Yuma Proving Ground (AZ), Ft. Devens (MA), and Vandenberg (CA).

The latest DOT Inspector General's report (AC-2003-057, Sept. 4, 2003) compared two sets of very similar VFR towers. The average cost to operate those run directly by the FAA was \$1.344 million per year. By contrast, the average cost to operate each of the contract towers was \$427,000 per year. Thus, on an apples vs. apples basis, a contract tower costs only one-third as much to operate. The report concludes that if the 189 contract towers included in its overall analysis had been run directly by FAA, the added cost would have been \$173 million a year.

During the 2003 FAA reauthorization debates, the controllers' union promoted legislation to make it illegal to competitively source control towers; they attempted to

have all air traffic control declared "inherently governmental." After President Bush threatened to veto the reauthorization bill if it restricted competitive sourcing, the anti-competition language was dropped.

As part of the deal to settle last year's battle, the Administration agreed not to add any new contract towers in FY2004. And Congress plans further oversight hearings on the subject during spring 2004.

Airport Outage Cut Off Controllers

Washington Post

April 14, 2004

A power outage at Los Angeles International Airport on Monday that caused air traffic control to lose a communication system for three hours has prompted the Federal Aviation Administration to investigate the reliability of its power backup systems.

At 9:38 a.m. Monday, a bird struck a power line near the airport, causing a three-second power loss, airport officials said. The outage briefly knocked out the lights at the airport terminals. After power was restored, it took more than three hours for the airport's air traffic control tower to get all of its communication systems back on line.

The power loss delayed at least 80 flights in the area and resulted in two commercial airliners flying too close to each other as controllers struggled to manage the traffic jam in the sky, a spokesman for the air traffic controllers' union said.

"This was a serious failure," said Bob Marks, regional vice president for the National Air Traffic Controllers Association's Western Pacific Region. "It's extremely rare for it to happen. It's a real uncomfortable feeling to either not see the planes or not be able to talk to them."

Airport officials and airline representatives asked the Federal Aviation Administration yesterday to inspect backup power systems at all major air traffic control facilities. In a letter to FAA Administrator Marion Blakey, airlines and the airport expressed concern that "critical FAA facilities" were "susceptible to equipment failures." The letter asked that FAA contingency plans "include reviewing uninterrupted power system capabilities at all FAA facilities."

The FAA said yesterday it would investigate why a battery-powered backup system failed, which kept generators from turning on. For now the agency is considering the outage a "one-time event," according to FAA spokeswoman Laura Brown.

"We want to get to the bottom of what happened," Brown said.

For about one minute, air traffic controllers had to scramble to communicate with pilots approaching the air-

(continued on page 15)

FAA Federal Contract Tower Program

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

FY '05 Congressional Appropriations Request

To maintain the current program, the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) and its affiliated organization, the U.S. Contract Tower Association, request \$86 million in the FY '05 DOT Appropriations bill for FAA's base line Contract Tower Program in addition to \$7 million for the continuation of the cost-sharing program.

Background

- The FAA Federal Contract Tower Program has provided essential air traffic safety services since 1982. Currently, 223 smaller airports in 46 states participate in the program. This represents 45 percent of all control towers in the U.S. In addition, federal contract towers handle approximately 25 percent of control tower aircraft operations for about 10 percent of FAA's budget to operate all control towers in the U.S. Several non-towered airports are expected to enter the program, subject to available funding.
- The safety and efficiency record of the Federal Contract Tower Program for the past two decades has been validated numerous times by the DOT Inspector General (IG) and FAA safety audits, as well as by the National Transportation Safety Board. The IG also has verified the cost-effectiveness of the program to taxpayers.
- All federal contract controllers are FAA certified air traffic controllers who meet the identical training and operating standards as FAA 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 of contract controllers, security and facility evaluations.
- As a result of this 22-year government/industry partnership, the Federal Contract Tower Program: (1) enhances aviation safety at smaller airports that in many cases would not have a tower; (2) saves local airports and communities up to \$80 million annually; (3) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users (pilots, airlines, FBOs, flight schools and corporate flight departments), and (4) helps small airports with retaining and developing commercial air service and corporate aviation.
- Federal contract towers operate together with FAA-staffed facilities throughout the country as part of a unified national air traffic control system. A case in point was September 11, 2001, when FAA contract controllers from 219 airports worked side by side with the FAA controller workforce to safely land thousands of airplanes that day. Additionally, federal contract controllers work closely with FAA and the Department of Homeland Security on in-flight aviation security issues.
- In summary, without a federal program that provides financial assistance, sets safety and training standards, certifies operations and monitors all aspects of contract tower facilities, many of these towers would have to close.

For further information on FAA's Federal Contract Tower Program, please contact Spencer Dickerson of the AAAE office at 703/824-0500, ext. 130 or email at sdickerson@airportnet.org or visit www.airportnet.org/cta.

port using battery-powered radios before radar and the normal radio communication system were restored. Another communication system connecting air traffic controllers in Los Angeles and San Diego and crucial for managing incoming planes at Los Angeles International was down for three hours.

Marks said that during the system breakdown, the controllers directed planes to circle around the area. One passenger plane circling in a holding pattern for landing at Los Angeles came too close to another passenger plane headed to San Diego, Marks said. He didn't know whether the two planes were too close vertically, less than 1,000 feet apart, or horizontally, less than five miles, either of which violates FAA safety standards.

The FAA said that all control towers have backup generators that allow them to continue operations during a power loss. The generators at the airport had just been serviced a month ago, and the tower functioned properly during a power loss earlier this month, FAA spokeswoman Brown said.

Take Note of Kerry's Vow On Deficit

Washington Post

April 9, 2004

Sen. John F. Kerry's campaign pledge this week to deflate the ballooning federal budget deficit contains several provisions that could affect the federal workforce.

The presumptive Democratic nominee said he would cut 100,000 federal contractor jobs, cap federal travel budgets, and streamline federal agencies and commissions to rein in administrative costs by 5 percent, among other moves.

"And when we're done, the federal government will be smaller, but smarter, more effective and less expensive," Kerry said Wednesday in a speech at Georgetown University.

Jason Furman, Kerry's economic policy director, said yesterday that the government could save \$60 billion over 10 years by cutting contractors and freezing the federal travel budget at \$8 billion annually. He conceded he did not know how much trimming administrative costs by 5 percent would save, saying only that it would be "substantial."

The speech provided a broad look at Kerry's fiscal policy. Over the coming months, the Massachusetts Democrat will lay out "a more comprehensive, detailed agenda to reform government and improve the way that it does business," Furman said.

The proposals are the seeds of an alternative to President Bush's "Management Agenda," a 71-page plan that calls for opening more government jobs to competition from private contractors, for reducing fraud and mismanagement, for making more government services available

online and for linking program funding to performance.

Federal union leaders called Kerry's promise to wipe out 100,000 federal contractors an important counter to Bush's efforts to move as many as 434,820 federal jobs to the private sector as part of his "competitive sourcing" initiative.

"A pledge to reverse the Bush Administration's ruinous policy of wholesale privatization will be strongly supported by all taxpayers," John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, said in a statement.

But Chris Jahn, the head of the Contract Services Association of America, dismissed the pledge as "empty campaign rhetoric." He said the loss of so many contract workers would hurt the government's ability to carry out important missions such as rebuilding Iraq.

"Senator Kerry, if he were to become president, would quickly learn that the partnership between government and the private sector is necessary to run the nation efficiently," Jahn said in a statement.

About 8 million people worked for government contractors and organizations that received government grants in 2002, up from about 7 million in 1999, according to a recent Brookings Institution study. Federal civil servants numbered about 1.8 million. The government spent \$245 billion in 2002 on contracts worth \$25,000 or more, said Paul C. Light, a government professor at New York University.

Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which has endorsed Kerry, said it is harder for officials to monitor the cost and quality of work done by contractors.

"Many times it could be done better and less expensively by federal employees," Kelley said. "But once the work moves outside the federal government, there is not a process to bring it back in."

As for the other proposals, Kelley said she is sure there is money to be saved in agency travel budgets. She said that employees could help identify ways to trim administrative costs, but that she would not support laying off workers.

"Many times federal employees end up being the targets of candidates, as they are with the current administration," she said. "So to have somebody who recognizes the work that federal employees do . . . I see as a very positive thing."

Clay Johnson III, deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget, said what the White House cares about are results. "The federal government is better managing the people's money today than ever before," Johnson said in a statement.

Light said polls traditionally have shown that the pub-

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lic trusts Republicans more than Democrats to manage the government efficiently. Kerry's proposals appear to be an attempt to blunt GOP charges that he is a big spender, Light said.

"Focusing on contractors right now is politically attractive, because Americans are pretty well convinced that federal contractors . . . are just as wasteful as federal employees, if not more so," Light said.

"The problem is that it's not a very robust management agenda when you are up against the 'MBA president,' " Light added. "And I think the Kerry people have some distance to go in developing a much more aggressive management agenda that really could challenge Bush's control of that particular issue."

Kerry Vows No ATC Privatization

Airports

March 9, 2004

Air traffic control towers would not be privatized during a Kerry administration, presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) promised the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) last week.

The union is backing Kerry's candidacy.

In a March 2 letter to NATCA, Kerry criticized what he called "the Bush administration's systematic plans to diminish our air traffic control system," and its goal of privatizing ATC.

The Bush administration has said it does not intend a sweeping privatization of FAA towers, but its assertion that it had the right to extend the Contract Tower program held up consensus on FAA reauthorization late last year.

Though many political observers see Kerry's pledge as standard fare for a Democratic candidate appealing for labor's support, Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) sees the issue re-emerging in Congress and called Kerry's position a "key distinction" between the two candidates.

"I think this could become a major issue in the presidential race, as it is a stark example of how the Bush administration is devoted to an ideological extremist agenda even when it puts the American people in danger," Lautenberg told Airports Thursday.

Airport officials view opposition to the Contract Tower Program extension to the 69 VFR towers as short-sighted. "We hope the Contract Tower Program doesn't get confused with privatization," said Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of the American Association of Airport Executives and executive director of the U.S. Contract Tower Association. "It's a federal program that allows smaller communities to have control towers they wouldn't have otherwise," he said.

There are 219 contract towers, more than half of them in communities where previously there were no control towers. "It's an effective way for FAA to provide ATC services, particularly during tight budget times," he said.