



January 8, 2015

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kelly Ayotte
Chairman, Subcommittee
Aviation Operations, Safety & Security
U.S. Senate
560 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Subcommittee
Aviation Operations, Safety & Security
U.S. Senate
427 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Thune and Ayotte and Ranking Members Nelson and Cantwell:

As members of the Beyond the Runway Coalition, we are writing in strong support of efforts to modernize our nation's airports through legislation to reauthorize programs at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). As coalition partners – including contractors, vendors, retail establishments, restaurants, hotels, businesses, tourism groups, municipalities, and state officials – we all have a vested interest in ensuring that airports remain not only gateways to our country and the rest of the world but also strong economic engines and job centers for their local communities.

Our Beyond the Runway Coalition is a dynamic and diverse group of business and association leaders who see the value of America's airports as strong economic engines and job centers both locally and nationally. Together, we are aligned in our support for modernizing airport infrastructure financing to ensure our nation's airports have the resources they need to remain competitive and thriving hubs of economic opportunity.

We firmly believe that modernizing airport infrastructure is the best option for strengthening our nation's aviation system to meet the needs of today and the challenges of tomorrow. America's airports are powerful economic engines, generating more than \$1.1 trillion in annual activity and supporting more than 9.6 million jobs. However, airports require approximately \$15.14 billion annually in infrastructure improvements to update aging facilities, relieve delays and congestion, promote safety and security, enhance the passenger experience, as well as spur airline competition to provide consumers with more choices and affordable options. This is far more than the \$6.2 billion that airports received from both local user fees and federal grants in Fiscal Year 2014.

At a time when there is mounting pressure to reduce federal spending, modernizing the system that allows airports to set a locally-determined fee for use of their facilities – coupled with protecting the federal trust-fund program supported entirely by users of the aviation system – is the most free-market option to provide airports with the locally controlled self-help they need to finance critical infrastructure projects. These measures would give airports the tools they need to ensure the continued safety, security, and modernization of their facilities.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. The Beyond the Runway Coalition – and our nation’s airports through the collective efforts of Airports Council International – North America, the American Association of Airport Executives, and the U.S. Travel Association’s Gateway Airports Council – stands ready to work with you to achieve a forward-looking FAA reauthorization bill that benefits passengers and strengthens our nation’s aviation system.

Sincerely,

