Testimony of John K. Duval, A.A.E., Airport Safety and Security Coordinator, Beverly Municipal Airport and Second Vice Chair, American Association of Airport Executives

The American Association of Airport Executives
601 Madison St., Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314
www.aaae.org
703.824.0500

Statement of

John K. Duval, A.A.E.

Airport Safety and Security Coordinator,

Beverly Municipal Airport

Before the

Subcommittee on Aviation

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

U.S. House of Representatives

February 13, 2008

Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, thank you for inviting me to participate in this hearing on runway safety. I am John K. Duval, A.A.E., the Airport Safety and Security Coordinator for the Beverly Municipal Airport, a general aviation and reliever airport located approximately 22 miles north of Boston.

Prior to joining the team in Beverly, I was the Deputy Director for Aviation & Operations at the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport). I am also proud to serve on the Executive Committee of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). AAAE is the world's largest professional organization representing the men and women who manage primary, commercial service, reliever and general aviation airports.

I would like to commend this subcommittee for using this hearing to focus on runway safety. As passenger numbers continue to increase and the number of aircraft operations rise, concerns about runway safety continue to grow. Aviation growth is critically linked to the economic health of our country. The ability to deliver goods and services at a reasonable cost is an important element of nearly all business success. Even more critical is the impact to the nation's economy when the cost and the confidence in air travel falters.

Government investment in aviation infrastructure and aviation safety reflects sound fiscal policy. The fastest growing nations on earth have recognized this and are spending vast sums of capital to develop their aviation infrastructure. The United States invented aviation, and we cannot afford to coast on our past accomplishments while other countries outpace our innovations and investments and capitalize on the global economy.

While our own aviation system continues to expand, aviation safety must continue to be our top priority. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) rightfully cites the need to improve runway safety and reduce runway incursions on its list of Most Wanted Transportation Safety Improvements. As passenger enplanements, aircraft and operations rise, it is imperative that all of us -- the Administration, aviation stakeholders and Congress -- redouble our efforts to improve runway safety.

Mr. Chairman, before I proceed I would like to thank you, Ranking Member Petri, Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica for the leadership that you provided on H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007. The four-year Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill includes a number of provisions that would help improve aviation safety and particularly runway safety.

Airports are particularly grateful that the FAA reauthorization bill, which the House of Representatives passed last year, would raise the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) cap from $4.50 to $7.00 and increase funding for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) by $100 million per year. If enacted into law, these two funding provisions would help airports build the infrastructure they need to improve runway safety and accommodate increasing demand.

Increasing Demand, Operations and Runway Incursions

Increasing Demand: Last March, the FAA released its Aerospace Forecast for 2007 to 2020. As members of this subcommittee are well aware, the Forecast indicates that passenger enplanements will increase from approximately 740 million in 2006 to more than one billion passengers by 2015. The FAA will be releasing updated projections at its 33rd Annual Aviation Forecast Conference, which AAAE is cosponsoring, on March 10th and 11th here in Washington, DC.

The FAA's current Aerospace Forecast predicts that the number of U.S. mainline carrier jets will increase from approximately 3,886 in 2006 to 6,041 by 2020 -- an increase of 55.5 percent. According to the agency, the number of regional jets used by U.S. regional carriers will increase by 1,000 between 2006 and 2020. When coupled with turboprop aircraft, the overall fleet for U.S. regional carriers is expected to increase from 2,743 to 3,694 -- an increase of 34.7 percent.

The demand for air cargo is also increasing. The FAA is predicting that total Revenue Ton Miles -- or the measurement of moving one ton of cargo one mile -- will increase from 39.7 billion in 2006 to 81.3 billion in 2020. To handle that increased load, the number of cargo aircraft is expected to increase from approximately 1,000 in 2006 to 1,468 in 2020, which is an increase of approximately 47 percent.

The FAA is also predicting that the general aviation fleet will increase by almost 50,000 aircraft between 2006 and 2020. Very Lights Jets (VLJs) are expected to begin filling the skies, too. The agency expects 350 VLJs will join the fleet this year and increase by 400

to 500 per year through 2020. In other words, approximately 5,000 VLJs may be operating by 2017.

Increasing Operations: As the numbers of passengers, cargo and aircraft increase so do operations at airports around the country. Overall, the number of take-offs and landings at the nation's towered airports will increase dramatically from approximately 61.1 million in 2006 to 81.1 million by 2020 -- 20 million more operations than there are today.

"As more planes carry more passenger and cargo, FAA and contract towers will need to handle an average of 1.4 million more U.S. operations each year between now and 2020," Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters said at the FAA Aviation Forecast Conference last year. "To put this number in perspective, imagine adding twice the traffic at Dallas-Fort Worth airport into the system every year."

According to the FAA's latest Terminal Area Forecast, operations at Los Angeles International Airport are expected to increase almost 63 percent between 2006 and 2020. Operations are expected to increase by more than 34 percent at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and by more than 31 percent at Dallas Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport during the same time period.

Increasing Number of Runway Incursions: In Fiscal Year 2001 (FY01) there were 407 runway incursions at a rate of 5.9 incursions per million operations. The number of runway incursions declined in FY02 and again in FY03 when there were 323 incursions at a rate of 5.1 incursions per million operations. Since then, however, the number of runway incursions and the rate of incursions have been slightly rising.

In FY07, there were 370 runway incursions at a rate of 6.05 incursions per 1 million operations. This translates into approximately one runway incursion per day. If runway incursions continue at a rate of approximately 6 incursions per million operations and the overall number of operations increases by 20 million per year by 2020 there would be an additional 120 runway incursions per year.

Although the number of Category A runway incursions -- or the most serious -- are a small percentage of the total runway incursions, the number of Category A runway incursions has been increasing in recent years. In FY03 there were 10 Category A runway incursions at a rate of 0.16 incursions per million operations. The number and rate of incursions more than doubled in FY06 to 24 at a rate of 0.39 incursions per million operations.

According to the FAA, pilot deviations caused 54 percent of runway incursions between FY03 and FY06. Operational errors and deviations, which are air traffic controller actions, accounted for 29 percent. Vehicle and pedestrian deviations caused 17 percent. Although the number of pilot deviations increased 9 percent between FY03 and FY06, the number of vehicle and pedestrian deviations declined 15 percent during the same four-year period.

Airports are Working with the FAA and Aviation Stakeholders to Improve Runway Safety

During my career I have investigated countless runway incursions and spent many hours in aircraft cockpits, air traffic control towers and in vehicles on the airfield. I have participated in numerous meetings with aviation stakeholders and FAA sponsored Tiger Teams in an effort to reduce runway incursions. One thing that has become very clear to me is that each incident is unique in one way or another.

There is no easy fix and no magic bullet to improving runway safety and reducing runway incursions. As in security, runway safety must be a multi-layered approach with numerous checks and balances. Airports, airlines, FAA and industry must continue to work together to make safety improvements. Runway Safety Action Teams and other forums are bringing together the best and brightest minds in aviation to focus on runway safety issues.

Although we don't have all the answers yet, we are making progress on improving runway safety through a variety of means including the use of new technology, enhanced taxiway markings, airfield changes and improved training. The following describes some of the steps that airports are taking to help improve runway safety and reduce runway incursions.

New Runways, Taxiways and Design Changes: In an effort to improve runway safety and to keep up with increasing demand, airports are using PFC revenue and AIP funds to build more airside capacity enhancing projects at their facilities. As the number of passengers, aircraft and operations continue to increase, it is critical that we continue to provide airports with the tools to invest in airside projects such as runways and taxiways to increase capacity on the ground.

When FAA Acting Administrator Bobby Sturgell testified before this subcommittee last September, he indicated that 13 new runways have opened at 35 Operational Evolution Partnership (OEP) airports since 2000. He also pointed out that eight OEP airports are in the process of constructing airfield projects. Airports are relying on PFC revenue to help build those projects. According to the FAA, approximately 32 percent of PFCs approved in FY06 are being used for airside projects including those at OEP airports. Fifteen OEP airports have used more than $4.6 billion in PFC revenue to help build new runways and increase capacity.

Taxiway design changes in Atlanta, San Diego and Boston are also underway to provide safer routing of aircraft and minimize the potential for incursions. The Boston Logan International Airport even installed 175,000 square feet of artificial turf in a taxiway reconfiguration project to make its airfield safer. The artificial turf makes it easier and safer to maintain taxiway shoulders and small "islands" between busy taxiways. The airport installed most of the artificial turf over existing hard surfaces, which eliminates

the need to repaint those areas. Replacing painted surfaces with artificial turf also makes the airfield safer by creating greater visual contrasts for pilots.

Runway Safety Areas/Engineered Materials Arresting System: The FAA requires that commercial service airports, where possible, have Runway Safety Areas that are 500 feet wide and extend 1,000 feet beyond both ends of the runway. Airports are working with the FAA to add runway safety areas to runways at commercial service airports around the country and installing a relatively new technology at airports with space restrictions.

According to a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on runway safety, "70 percent of the 1,014 runways at the 573 commercial airports in the United States substantially comply with runway safety standards, up from 55 percent in 2000." The report also indicates that airports have used approximately $300 million per year in AIP funds for runway safety area improvements and that "$1.1 billion is expected to be needed to complete the remaining 207 projects."

There are a number of airports around the country where it is not physically possible to extend their runways by 1,000 feet on each end. Consequently, many airports are using AIP funds and PFC revenue to install Engineered Materials Arresting Systems (EMAS). EMAS is a bed of lightweight, crushable concrete that is used to stop aircraft in overrun incidents where adequate runway safety areas are not feasible. Currently, 21 airports in the United States are using EMAS at 31 runway ends.

Massport installed two EMAS systems at Boston Logan International Airport – one in 2005 and the other the following year. Each cost approximately $3 million. Logan is a space constrained airport that is surrounded on three sides by water and one side by a densely populated residential community. Since filling Boston Harbor was not a viable solution and the runway lengths could not be shortened without significant impacts on capacity, EMAS was the only solution to maintaining capacity and increasing safety.

According to the FAA, the agency has plans "to install 14 EMAS systems at 8 additional airports." EMAS technology has already proven its worth by saving passengers and aircraft in four separate incidents. The most recent incident occurred in July 2006 when a malfunction of an antiskid braking system caused a Falcon 900 to overrun the runway at the Greenville Downtown Airport in South Carolina.

Perimeter/End-Around Taxiways: Airports are also beginning to add perimeter and end-around taxiways to reduce runway crossings and the potential for runway incursions. The Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest airport, installed an end-around taxiway early last year. The FAA indicates that the new taxiway is "expected to eliminate an average of 700 runway crossings per day…." Aviation officials expect that the taxiway will also save the airlines at least $27 million per year.

DFW International Airport, the world's third busiest airport, is also engaged in a perimeter taxiway project that will include perimeter taxiways in all four quadrants of the airfield. The perimeter taxiway in the southeast quadrant is approximately 42 percent

complete, and airport officials expect to finish the first perimeter taxiway by the end of the year. The entire project is expected to eliminate as many as 1,700 runway crossings per day.

Last year, the Flight Safety Foundation presented its annual Airport Safety Award to officials at DFW International Airport for their leadership on aviation safety issues and for advancing the concept of perimeter taxiways. The well-deserved citation indicates that perimeter taxiways are "expected to reduce runway incursion accidents, reduce the volume of pilot-controller communications and increase airport efficiency."

The perimeter and end-around taxiways at DFW and Hartsfield-Jackson International Airports provide good examples of how airports are using AIP funds and PFC revenue on airside capacity projects to increase safety and reduce airline delays. The end-around taxiway at the Atlanta airport cost approximately $47 million to build. The airport will receive $26 million in AIP funds through a Letter of Intent program, and the airport plans to use PFC revenue to pay for the remaining $21 million.

The southeast quadrant of the DFW perimeter taxiway project is expected to cost more than $66 million. The airport plans to use $43.3 million in AIP funds and an additional $22.8 million in PFC revenue to pay for that phase of the project. DFW intends to add three additional perimeter taxiways to its facility during the next ten years. The remainder of the project is expected to cost approximately $220 million, and the airport is planning to use AIP funds and PFC revenue for this safety project.

Enhanced Surface Markings: Airports around the country are helping to improve runway safety and reduce the potential for runway incursions by using enhanced taxiway centerline markings and surface holding position signs. The FAA and the MITRE Corporation tested the enhanced surface markings at the T.F. Green State Airport in Providence, Rhode Island in 2003 and at Boston Logan in 2004.

The test results were overwhelmingly positive, and the FAA subsequently issued an Advisory Circular in 2005 that requires commercial service airports with more than 1.5 million enplanements per year to enhance their surface markings by June 30, 2008. According to the FAA, 71 of the top 75 airports are already complying with that requirement, and "the remaining four will have their markings in place well before the 2008 deadline."

I am pleased that the FAA recently issued a draft Advisory Circular that would extend the enhanced surface marking requirement to all Part 139 airports as recommended by the NTSB. Standardization has long been a crucial tenet at all of our commercial airports, and I commend the FAA for adopting this change. I am also encouraged by FAA's report that 62 smaller airports have already enhanced their surface markings and that "121 airports plan to complete the work by the end of the year...."

While this may seem like a relatively inexpensive way to improve runway safety, members of this subcommittee should know that that simply painting these markings can

cost nearly $500,000 at a large hub airport. Requiring all Part 139 airports to enhance their surface markings will place additional funding requirements on smaller airports with limited AIP funds and PFC revenue.

Driver Training/Interactive Employee Training: In its latest Runway Safety Report, the FAA points out that "technology, training, safety promotion and situational awareness are key to reducing the severity and frequency of runway incursions." I completely agree and am very proud of the work that AAAE is doing to improve aviation safety by offering customized training programs to airports around the country.

AAAE has developed a patented computer-based Interactive Employee Training (IET) system that is being used to train airport employees, airline employees and other airport tenants. Employees begin the training course by viewing a digital video on an airport-related topic at a computer terminal. After watching the customized video, which is recorded on-site at the airport, employees use touch-screen technology to answer questions that test employees' understanding of the course material.

Since 2001, AAAE's IET systems have delivered almost 1 million training sessions at 55 airports around the country. IET training programs are highly effective in training employees because each video features an airport's actual work environment. Many of the training programs focus on airport operational safety topics such as movement and non-movement area driver training, airfield safety and incursion prevention, driver training for general aviation areas and Part 139 recurrent training.

AAAE's IET system provides comprehensive training, and the interactive testing ensures that the employees truly understand the topic of the course. There are distinct disadvantages of accepting different driver training programs from hundreds of different airport tenants. Airports have recognized this and are voluntarily adopting the standardization that is possible through AAAE's technological approach to training large groups of employees.

Annual Runway Safety Conferences: AAAE holds more than 80 workshops and conferences every year on a wide variety of aviation-related topics. Many of those meetings -- including our 80th Annual Conference and Exposition that will be held in New Orleans in June -- provide airport employees, other aviation stakeholders and Administration officials with a helpful forum to discuss ways to improve aviation safety.

In November, AAAE, MITRE and others held a two-day Runway Safety Summit. At the annual conference, FAA and NTSB officials, airport representatives and aviation stakeholders discussed advancements in runway safety, new technology and lessons learned from recent accidents and incidents. Our next Runway Safety Summit is scheduled for November.

Last year, AAAE also joined with the FAA to hold the 14th Annual Airfield Safety, Sign Systems and Maintenance Management Workshop. This workshop is designed to educate airfield maintenance personnel about runway safety, runway and EMAS

maintenance and new technologies. The 15th Annual Airfield Safety, Sign Systems and Maintenance Management Workshop will be help in April in Los Angeles.

New Technology

Airport Movement Areas Safety System: In an effort to help air traffic controllers reduce runway incursions, the FAA has deployed the Airport Movement Area Safety System (AMASS) at the top 34 airports. When she testified before this subcommittee last year, Peggy Gilligan, the Deputy Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety at the FAA, described how AMASS "tracks ground movements and provides an alert so controllers can notify the crew if evasive action is required."

Airport Surface Detection Equipment, Model X: The Airport Surface Detection Equipment, Model X (ASDE-X) is another system being used to reduce runway incursions at busy airports. The FAA indicates that this system "enables air traffic controllers to detect potential runway conflicts by providing detailed coverage of movement on runways and taxiways. By collecting data from a variety of sources, ASDE-X is able to track vehicles and aircraft on the movement area and obtain identification information from aircraft transponders." The ASDE-X is now operational at 11 airports, and the agency plans to deploy the system at all 35 OEP airports by 2010.

Runway Status Lights: Although the NTSB credits the FAA for installing AMASS and ASDE-X to help inform air traffic controllers of potential runway incursions, the board indicates that these two systems "are not sufficient as designed to prevent all runway incursions." In 2000, the NTSB recommended that all airports with scheduled passenger service have "a ground movement safety system that will prevent runway incursions" and "provide a direct warning capability to flight crews."

One of the most promising technological improvements to prevent runway incursions and provide information directly to flight crews is the use of Runway Status Lights (RWSL). The system uses radar to anticipate the use of a runway by an arriving or departing aircraft and then controls a series of lights to provide information to pilots and vehicle drivers regarding the runway status. It can also provide information to a departing or taxing aircraft regarding conflicts on the intended runway.

The system consists of runway entrance lights and take-off hold lights. The runway entrance lights, which are located on taxiways near runway intersections, turn red to warn pilots when a runway is unsafe to enter or cross. Take-off hold lights, which are located on runways near the departure point, similarly turn red to warn pilots that a runway is unsafe to use. The beauty of this system is that it is not intended to replace the interaction between the ATC and the aircraft or vehicles on the airfield. But it does provide another layer of information that is independent of human error.

The FAA began testing RWSL technology at DFW in 2003 and later at San Diego International Airport. The FAA also plans to begin testing runway intersection lights at Chicago O'Hare International Airport this year. While it may seem that using RWSL is a

new idea, the use of runway safety lights was originally developed and tested more than 10 years ago at Boston Logan International Airport. Unfortunately, however, the system failed to receive the support needed to move it forward.

Chairman Rosenker indicated in his testimony before this subcommittee last year that "initial test results have been promising...." Last month, the Department of Transportation (DOT) Inspector General's office released its review of the FAA's progress in implementing RWSL. The Inspector General's office concluded that runway status lights are a "viable and important technology for reducing runway incursions...." The report also indicated that runway incursions at the test runway at DFW decreased 70 percent.

It is clear from the test results that RWSL can be an effective tool in helping reduce runway incursions. I hope that the FAA will continue to work with airports and other aviation stakeholders in an effort to expedite the deployment of this system. I also commend the members of this subcommittee for designating funds from the FAA's Facilities and Equipment account to pay for acquisition and installation of Runway Status Lights in the House version of the FAA reauthorization bill.

Low Cost Ground Surveillance: Not surprisingly, developing, deploying and maintaining new technology to improve runway safety at airports can be extremely expensive. The GAO indicates that total ASDE-X program, which the FAA plans to deploy at the top 35 airports, will cost more than $800 million. The FAA is currently testing the use of Low Cost Ground Surveillance (LCGS) systems that could be very beneficial in improving runway safety at small- to medium-sized airports at a fraction of the cost of ASDE-X.

The FAA has been testing two LCGS options at the Spokane International Airport. One is the Critical Area Management System, which consists of five millimeter wave sensors that detect motion on the airport's runway, taxiways and ramp areas. The other is the Nova 9000 Surface Management System, which uses X-band radar to detect ground movements. I know airport officials are excited about these two systems because they appear to be effective, relatively inexpensive and easy to install.

It is my understanding that the testing at the Spoke International Airport is expected to conclude in 2009 and that the FAA is planning to expand the LCGS test to six additional airports in different parts of the country this year. I know some of my airport colleagues are very encouraged by the prospect of this low-cost technology and have offered to work with the FAA and volunteer their respective airports to participate in the LCGS test. I hope the additional evaluations will yield positive results and that the FAA will be able to expedite the deployment of this system, too.

Foreign Objects or Debris: In July 2000, an Air France Concorde flight taking off from Charles DeGaulle International Airport crashed into a hotel, killing 113 people. The crash occurred after one of the aircraft's tires hit a piece of titanium that had fallen off a previously departed aircraft. While this is the most extreme example of an incident

caused by foreign objects or debris (FOD) on a runway, airlines report hundreds of millions of dollars annually in damage and delays caused by FOD ingestion.

Several companies have focused on this problem and have developed radar and optical solutions to instantly detect potentially damaging FOD on runways. The FAA has been very supportive of these technologies and has worked with airports and universities to conduct pilot programs in Vancouver, Providence and Boston. These programs are showing the products' viability in preventing accidents such as the one that occurred near Paris.

What Congress Can Do To Help Airports Improve Runway Safety

Pass a Multi-Year FAA Reauthorization Bill; Short-Term Extension: Mr. Chairman, I would again like to thank you and your colleagues on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the leadership you have provided on H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act. As I mentioned previously, airports are particularly grateful that the House-passed version of the FAA reauthorization bill would raise the PFC cap to $7.00 and increase AIP funding by $100 million per year.

In addition to the increased funding levels, H.R. 2881 includes a number of provisions that would help to improve aviation safety in general and runway safety in particular. Unfortunately, however, the reauthorization bill has been stalled on the other side of the Capitol largely over a debate about how to pay for Air Traffic Control modernization. Airport executives around the country hope that lawmakers will be able to work out their differences and pass a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill as quickly as possible.

Vision 100, the previous FAA reauthorization bill, expired almost five months ago. Although Congress appropriated more than $3.5 billion for AIP in FY08, AIP contract authority expired at the end of December. Unless Congress acts soon, funds that airports need to increase capacity, reduce airline delays and build other critical safety and security projects will continue to be held up. We simply cannot afford to delay funding for these vital infrastructure projects any longer.

Airports are asking Congress to quickly pass a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill that raises the PFC cap to $7.00 and increases AIP funding by $100 million per year as this subcommittee proposed. If that is not possible, we urge you to quickly approve short-term legislation that would extend AIP contract authority so the FAA can begin to release AIP funds to airports throughout the country. It is also critical that Congress extend the aviation excise taxes, which expire at the end of February, and the airport and airway trust fund expenditure authority.

FAA's Chief Financial Officer Ramesh K. Punwani talked about the severe consequences of not passing a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill or short-term extension when he testified before this subcommittee last week on the Administration's FY09 budget request. He indicated that the FAA will not be able distribute AIP funds to "62 airports

that have requested approximately $256 million in FY 2008 to upgrade their runway safety areas or make almost $250 million in discretionary letter of intent (LOI) payments."

Airport sponsors need assurances quickly that the FAA will release grants soon so they can issue bids for projects and take advantage of the construction season. As Punwani suggested, we are quickly nearing the point at which a portion of the construction season could be lost for many airports -- a fact that could delay critical safety and capacity projects. He also indicated that the agency's "airports, facilities and equipment and research personnel (approximately 4,000 employees) will be sent home" on March 1st unless Congress acts.

Considering the severe consequences of not passing a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill or short-term extension, I would like to thank the leaders of this committee and Rep. Charles Rangel, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, for joining together and introducing H.R. 5270. This bill would extend AIP contract authority, the aviation excise taxes and the airport and airway trust fund expenditure authority through the end of June and allow the FAA to begin distributing AIP funds. I hope Congress will quickly pass this critical legislation.

Raise the PFC Cap, Increase AIP Funding: Congress can help airports improve safety and accommodate increasing demand by approving a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill that raises the PFC cap to $7.00 and increases AIP funding by $100 million per year. Due to the leadership on this subcommittee, the House of Representative has done its part by passing H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007. Airports around the country truly appreciate your efforts.

Given the increasing demand, rapidly rising construction costs and the need to fund safety projects at airports around the country, airport executives are dismayed that the Administration is only requesting $2.75 billion for AIP in FY09. That is more than $1.1 billion less than the amount included in H.R. 2881 and in the FAA reauthorization bill passed by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. It is also $765 million less than the amount Congress appropriated for the current fiscal year.

We realize that this subcommittee has already spoken out about the need to increase funding for airport infrastructure projects by recommending record-level funding for AIP and raising the PFC cap. But we hope that you will work with your colleagues to reject the Administration's proposal to drastically cut AIP funding as Congress considers the FY09 Department of Transportation Appropriations bill.

Invest in the Airport Cooperative Research Program: I am privileged to sit on the oversight committee for the Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP). This program, which this subcommittee helped to create and fund as part of Vision 100, is fashioned after the very successful research programs developed for highway and rail. We are currently in the third year of a four-year pilot program that has focused on

research aimed at finding solutions for many of the safety, security and environmental challenges facing today's airports.

Although the ACRP has been operating for only a short period of time, I am pleased to report that it is already actively engaged in research on nearly 100 topics. In fact, the first results of some of this research are coming off the presses now. We have nearly a dozen published reports and expect to more than double that in the coming year. Earlier in my statement I discussed how some airports are using Engineered Materials Arresting Systems. As a result of the ACRP program, research is being conducted on alternative civil aircraft arresting systems.

Congress appropriated $10 million for ACRP in FY08. Airports are grateful that the House-passed version of the FAA reauthorization bill would authorize another $15 million per year for the program between FY09 and FY11. The reauthorization bill also includes recommendations endorsed by the House Science and Technology Committee that would specify how that funding is distributed. In FY09, for instance, the bill calls for $5 million for capacity research, $5 million for environmental research and $5 million for safety research.

Some of my colleagues who are involved with ACRP have expressed concerns that the bill would unnecessarily prescribe how limited funding for the program is to be spent. They would prefer that the final version of the FAA reauthorization bill eliminate those restrictions so more funding could be spent on safety research or one of the other proposed categories depending on the research needs of airports. We hope that you will consider making this modification in conference and truly appreciate your support for the ACRP.

Increase Funding for the Contract Tower Programs: The FAA's Contract Tower Program and Contract Tower Cost Share Programs have also improved runway safety at airports in small communities. The Contract Tower Program has been in place since 1982 and currently provides for the cost-effective operation of air traffic control towers at 239 smaller airports in 46 states. AIR-21 included a provision that created the Contract Tower Cost Share Program, which currently allows 26 airports in 22 states that fall slightly below the eligibility criteria to participate in the program if they provide local funds.

We are grateful that H.R. 2881 includes $8.5 million for the Contract Tower Cost Share Program in FY08, increases the amount by $500,000 per year and includes other provisions to improve the program. The reauthorization bill will keep the existing towers operating, allow additional airports to participate in the program and maintain the high-level of safety that comes with air traffic control services. Without the Contract Tower Programs many if these smaller airports simply would not have the added safety that comes with air traffic control services.

Conclusion

Again, Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing. I know I speak on behalf of my colleagues at airports around the country when I say we look forward to working with you, the Administration and aviation stakeholders to improve runway safety.