

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

SUBMITTED TO THE

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

On

Hearing:

**“The Cost of Doing Nothing: Why Investment in our Nation’s Airports
Matters”**

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Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, thank you for holding this hearing to address the importance of investment in our Nation's Airports. On behalf of the National Business Aviation Association's (NBAA's) 11,000-members, we are pleased to provide this testimony.

NBAA's members, rely on business aircraft to meet some portion of their transportation needs. The majority of business aircraft are operated by small businesses and in large part provide access to airports supporting communities that aren't served by the commercial airlines. While the airlines serve only around 500 airports, business aviation can reach 5,000 public use airports across the United States. These airports are also economic engines for the cities and towns they serve and our members and the general aviation community have great stake in their viability and accessibility.

The United States leads the world in having the most robust and diverse airport infrastructure capabilities, providing a critical foundation for general aviation to thrive. Transporting people and equipment, supporting natural disasters, providing air medical flights for organs and patients, offering a place for flight training and a base for inspiration and inception of career paths essential for all sectors of aviation – general aviation relies on the network of airports. The cost of doing nothing is too great and without continued investment in airport infrastructure the future of our country is grim.

Demands for investment in airport infrastructure are great. It is estimated that annual airport capital project needs are at approximately \$7 billion, with Airport Improvement Funding (AIP) only fulfilling half of that need at slightly over \$3 billion annually. State grants and access to the capital market can fill a small portion of the gap, however continued federal investment in airports is critical so that they can not only fulfill today's demands, but also handle tomorrow's requirements as well.

General aviation relies on facilities of all sizes. Federal investment in airports ensures their viability in multiple ways. Federal dollars allow for airports, especially smaller facilities, to remain affordable to general aviation use. Without this vital investment many local municipalities would not be able to maintain the infrastructure that links their community to the rest of the country and to the world. Aviation users would not be able to fund the costs to sustain these facilities through rents and fees alone.

Additionally, federal investment in airports protects our national aviation infrastructure from being shuttered. Unfortunately, there have been a number of communities that have made attempts to impose restrictions limiting access, such as curfews, weight and noise limits, on their airports attempting to gain local control of what is part of a national aviation-transportation system. Federal grant obligations play an important role in preventing these local patch-quilt operational restrictions and even complete closures.

Coleman A. Young Municipal Airport in Detroit, Michigan is one of examples of airports falling victim to disrepair without federal funding, struggling to maintain its runways and taxiways on its own. The East Hampton Airport at the eastern end of Long Island has made a conscious effort to forego federal funds and is threatening closure when its grant assurances expire in 2021. In the meantime, the Town of East Hampton, despite charging high landing fees, has not invested in maintaining the airport, jeopardizing safety. Despite the need for investment in maintenance, Santa Clara County, has chosen the same fate for the Reid-Hillview Airport, choosing to no

longer accept federal grants for a facility that is a reliever in the San Jose, California area and plays an important role in flight training and aviation education as part of the program administered by San Jose State University, starting the clock to run-out grant obligations by 2031.

On the other hand, airports that have made commitment to federal grants are benefiting greatly. Not only are these airports able to maintain their facilities to meet FAA's standards, many are expanding their runways and are acquiring land for development to meet growing demand and to maintain efficiency, procure latest equipment and technology and are complying with federal regulations, providing unrestricted access to all users.

In 2018 alone, over 40 airports have extended their runways using AIP funding. Ormond Beach Municipal Airport, a general aviation reliever, in Ormond Beach, Florida has received a grant to rehabilitate and extended its runway by 1,000 feet and to renew the runway lighting. City of Gooding, Idaho and Jeffersonville, Indiana have benefited from a \$1 million in AIP funding to extend their runways. Turners Falls Airport, Montague Massachusetts acquired snow equipment with the help of AIP funding, while Black Hills Airport - Clyde Ice Field in Spearfish South, Dakota used the money to conduct wildlife hazard assessments. These are just five of thousands of examples of airports across the country benefiting from federal investment in their infrastructure.

NBAA strongly supports continuing the commitment to investing in a strong national system of airports to meet the current needs and projected growth. We must maintain a healthy funding mechanism for airports of all sizes to meet changing demand and important safety and efficiency improvements.

We commend the Committee for recognizing the importance of our Nation's airports and look forward to collaboratively working to address the funding challenges of our Nation's greatest assets – its airports. The investment in general aviation airports, the backbone of our air transportation system, is critical in ensuring success of general aviation in the near term and for future generations. Thank you again for holding this important hearing.