



September 16, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
S-221, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

I am writing to urge you and your colleagues in Congress to pass a multi-year Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill or at the very least to extend aviation programs and excise taxes before the current FAA extension expires at the end of the month.

Since Congress has been unable to pass a multi-year FAA reauthorization in the past year, lawmakers have approved a series of short-term extensions instead. As you know, the current extension, which Congress passed in late June, expires on September 30th. Unless Congress acts soon, the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds that airports need to build critical safety, security and capacity projects will be held up like they were in the previous year when Congress considered numerous short-term extensions.

Additional delays in AIP funding would impact airports of all sizes and would be particularly hard on small airports that rely on federal funds for capital projects and on those airports in areas with short construction cycles. Many large airports would also be adversely affected because they count on AIP funds gained through Letters of Intent to build capacity-enhancing projects.

Airports around the country would strongly prefer that Congress pass a multi-year FAA reauthorization bill that raises the cap on Passenger Facility Charges to \$7.00, increases AIP funding by \$100 million per year and increases funding for programs that help small communities retain and attract commercial air service. While we are grateful that the House and Senate versions of the FAA reauthorization bill include a number of airport priorities, we are disappointed that Congress has yet to pass multi-year legislation.

If Congress is unable complete action on a multi-year bill this year, I would urge you to pass another FAA extension that lasts through the end of March 2009 or longer since the FAA argues that it needs at least a six-month extension to administer the AIP program. In addition to extending AIP contract authority, aviation excise taxes and the airport and airway trust fund expenditure authority, it is imperative that Congress pass the Fiscal Year 2009 Department of Transportation spending bill and appropriate funding for AIP.

Whether Congress considers a six-month extension or a bill covering a longer period of time, please ensure that the measure would allow the FAA to distribute AIP funds to airports early in the fiscal year. Again, it is absolutely critical that airports receive the AIP funds they need for safety, security and capacity projects as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Barclay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

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