

City of Minneapolis
Request for Committee Action

To: Intergovernmental Relations Committee
Date: February 18, 2016
From: Intergovernmental Relations Department
Prepared by: Loren Olson, Government Relations Representative
Presented by: Gene Ranieri, Director of Intergovernmental Relations
File type: Action
Subcategory: City Policies

Subject:

Amending Federal Aviation Policy Positions to include opposition to the privatization of Air Traffic Control

Description:

Authorizing an amendment to the Federal Aviation Policy Positions adopted in March, 2015 to include a statement that the city supports “maintaining Air Traffic Control (ATC) within the purview of FAA and opposes privatization of ATC.”

Previous Actions:

Adoption of Federal Aviation Policy Positions, March 5, 2015

Staff direction in Intergovernmental Relations Committee directing staff to compose a letter to be submitted to the proper federal authorities expressing the opinion of the City regarding concerns over privatization of air traffic control. February 4, 2016

Background/Analysis:

The Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act (H.R. 4441) was introduced on February 3, 2016 and would reauthorize Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) programs for a six-year period at \$69 billion. The current authorization expires on March 31, 2016. The AIRR Act includes a proposal to remove Air Traffic Control (ATC) from the purview of the FAA and to create an independent, not-for-profit, called the “ATC Corporation.” On February 11, the bill passed in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

The ATC Corporation would be led by a CEO and Board of Directors for total of 11 members. The principal organization representing commercial airlines would nominate the most members – with four. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation would appoint two members. Non-commercial users of general aviation would have two representatives. The principal organizations representing air traffic controllers and pilots would each nominate one representative. Elected officials and government employees are specifically precluded from serving on the board. The ATC Corporation would be empowered to set fees according to guidelines which include exempting non-commercial corporate jets and military aircraft.

The Minneapolis Federal Aviation Positions express support for “Improved FAA engagement of communities when developing and implementing PBN {Performance Based Navigation}” and “Enhanced opportunities for partnership and dialogue between local governments and the FAA.” The proposal to remove ATC from agency control and to create the entity as described appears inconsistent with these goals. The design of the Corporation and Board does not

provide a voice for communities impacted by airport noise or pollution, or their federal representatives in Congress.

The FAA and ATC are currently leading historical changes to airplane navigation, with the implementation of NextGen. Minneapolis has consistently expressed support for NextGen – navigation and procedures utilizing Performance Based Navigation (PBN) global positioning technology. However, NextGen will result in significant changes in the airspace and can be used to concentrate flight paths and thus concentrate noise and pollution. As these “highways in the sky” are developed it is critical to engage impacted communities in order to achieve a sustainable plan that is efficient and does not harm people or community assets. The City has urged the FAA and ATC to improve their engagement of the public and local officials regarding the design and implementation of these procedures in order to roll-out NextGen as effectively and expeditiously as possible.

At Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), PBN arrival procedures are being used however departures procedures are not. The City, among others, expressed concern about proposals for departure procedures and the potential for concentration of flights over densely populated areas, when proposed in 2012. The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) opposed the proposal for departures procedures at their November, 2012 meeting. The City and MAC have both conveyed to the FAA that any future discussion about new PBN procedures will require a robust engagement process. The ATC Corporation, as proposed, reduces accountability to the public and does not appear to improve local or national outcomes regarding safety or NextGen implementation.

It is proposed that the Federal Aviation Positions be amended to include a statement that the City supports; “maintaining Air Traffic Control (ATC) within the purview of FAA and opposes privatization of ATC.”

Financial Review:

No additional appropriation required, amount included in current budget.

Attachments:

1. Federal Aviation Policy Positions with proposed amendment