

AVIATION BOARD BACKGROUND LETTER

Aviation Board Meeting Date: November 16th, 2020

To: Chair Richmond and Aviation Board Members

Cc: Tim Kabat, Mayor

From: Ian Turner, Airport Director

Subject: 20-1619 – A motion approving the Airport Director to support matters in the best interest of the La Crosse Regional Airport

Summary:

This item acknowledges that legislative and administrative matters on a state and Federal level have impacts on the local airport. It approves the Airport Director to engage state and Federal representatives relating to the FAA Contract Tower Program, support of expanding Airport Improvement Program funding, increasing the Passenger Facility Charge, an expansion of allowable infrastructure eligible for Federal funding, state and local support to address concerns around per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, and support for screening of airport employees by the Transportation Security Administration.

Previous Action:

No previous action has been taken.

Background:

The intent of this action item is to approve the Airport Director to engage state and Federal officials and agencies in support of matters of interest and concern to the La Crosse Regional Airport. At this time, these items are:

1. The FAA Contract Tower Program – The La Crosse Airport Traffic Control Tower is operated by Midwest ATC, a contract tower operator in the FAA Contract Tower Program. This service allows us to have local Air Traffic Control service. Having Air Traffic Control on a local level enhances the service provided to local pilots. This includes local weather, instrument approach services, and flight planning to name a few. Support of this program is important to the future success of the airport.



2. Expand Airport Improvement Program funding – The Airport Improvement Program provides funding for most capital-intensive projects on airports. In recent years, the amount of funding for this program has been capped at \$3.35 billion dollars. According to the 2019 National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems produced by the Federal Aviation Administration, airport’s average \$7 billion annually in capital needs. Supporting an expansion of the Airport Improvement Program works to meeting the gap in current funding and needs.
3. Increased Passenger Facility Charge – The Passenger Facility Charge at LSE is assessed at the \$4.50 level and allows for a dedicated funding source for approved local needs. The statutory limit on this charge has remained at this \$4.50 per enplaned passenger since 2000. The lost purchasing power has reduced this financing tools effectiveness, resulting in the ability of airports to meet capital improvement needs as they once were. Industry efforts call for an immediate increase with ties to the Consumer Price Index going forward. At this time, efforts have been mostly unproductive. Support of this measure is similar in effect to that of the Airport Improvement Program effort.
4. Expanding Eligible Projects for Federal Funding – Over time, eligible projects for Federal funding have narrowed. This has resulted in once eligible projects, such as Runway 4/22, no longer being eligible. Valuable airport infrastructure has been lost as a result.
5. Supporting state and Federal funding to address the growing concerns around per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances – per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, have been found in the ground around the La Crosse Regional Airport. To date, several hundred thousand dollars have been spent investigating PFAS. This activity could continue to result in large sums of money being spent, particularly at this time since many unknowns exist around future requirements. It is prudent to find means to defer potential financial risk regarding this matter and support efforts to the end.
6. Supporting employee screening by the Transportation Security Administration – Insider threats are a concern of the Transportation Security Administration. It is intended at this point that airports will be responsible for screening employees at airports. This is a large undertaking with many unknown ramifications. Efforts must be made to support the Transportation Security Administration’s efforts to address insider threats while minimizing the associated costs and burdens of the proposed screening task. This means supporting the effort to mitigate the insider threat risk, but work to ensure it does not become the responsibility of airport operators to perform the screening.



Financial Implications:

All financial implications will be covered in the annual airport operating budget. Any additional costs will be brought to the Aviation Board.

Stakeholder Process:

This item was placed before the Aviation Board.

Alternatives:

- 1) This item could be denied in its entirety.
- 2) An amendment could be made, removing an item.
- 3) An amendment could be made, adding an item.

Staff Recommendation:

It is recommended to approve this item.

Attachments:

None

