TRANSPORTATION 2023:

How the U.S. is leading, commuting, and exploring

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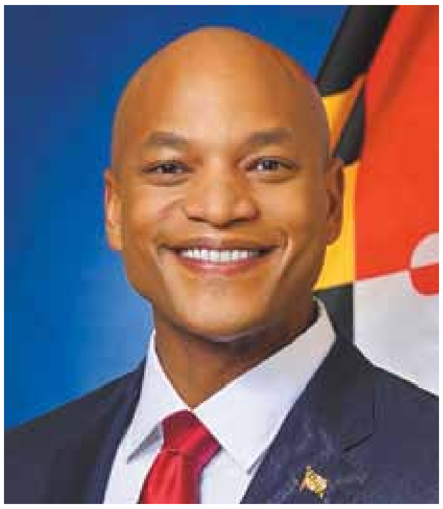
Traveling the road to prosperity in Maryland – by bus, bike, and rail



SHUTTERSTOCK / AJ PACKER

We've already worked together to bring millions of federal dollars to Maryland to benefit rail projects, bus lanes, and infrastructure for folks who travel by bike or electric vehicle.

By Governor Wes Moore

Show me a neighborhood with easy access to transportation, and I will show you a neighborhood that thrives. Show me a state that chooses to invest in transportation, and I will show you a state that leads. In each of America's most influential cities and states, policymakers developed a strategic plan to make transportation accessible for all–and they executed it.

My administration entered office guided by the promise that we would leave no one behind. To live up to the full meaning of that pledge, we must expand transportation options across our state to ensure all Marylanders can get from where they live to where opportunity lies–no matter their background, zip code, or income. While we understand the importance of fixing and making safe our roads and bridges, we need to think beyond cars and start investing in public transportation that benefits everyone.

For me, this mission isn't based on a thought experiment–it's rooted in the lived experiences of communities I've seen and known. Eight years ago, state government pulled the plug on the Baltimore Red Line, a groundbreaking transit project to connect historically underserved neighborhoods with growing job centers in the region. State money that should have gone toward construction was diverted to repave roads. Nearly one billion dollars in federal funding reserved for the project was handed back to the U.S. Treasury.

The decision to kill the Baltimore Red Line killed economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity. It's a cautionary tale on the ripple effects of policies to build up or break down public transportation. When you deprive people of physical mobility, you deprive them of economic mobility too.

In my first six months as governor, I restarted the Baltimore Red Line, and my team and I are working closely with community leaders to ensure we build on the progress that had already been made before the project died. But we need to do more than right the wrongs of the past, we need to blaze our own trail.

One of my first acts as governor was to invest $450 million toward the new Frederick Douglass Tunnel in Baltimore. This local, state, and federal project will replace a 150-year-old bottleneck and result in faster, more reliable Amtrak and commuter rail service between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The project will also generate up to 30,000 good-paying jobs in Maryland.

In addition, my administration is currently looking at options to expand the service of Maryland Area Commuter Rail–called MARC. Maryland has entered agreements with Virginia and Delaware to explore a potential extension of MARC into Alexandria and Newark. We're equally excited about moving forward with the Purple Line, a transformative, sixteen-mile, twenty-one-station, all-electric light rail line to provide better and more equitable access to transit and reduce vehicle emissions around the National Capital Region.

We have a lot of work to do. But I've never been more optimistic about our future, because we are moving in partnership with extraordinary leaders at all levels of government–including our talented congressional delegation. We've already worked together to bring millions of federal dollars to Maryland to benefit rail projects, bus lanes, and infrastructure for folks who travel by bike or electric vehicle.

But we are just getting started. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the largest federal investment in public transportation in United States history. I intend to do whatever it takes to ensure Maryland wins every federal dollar we can.

I am confident that this is Maryland's decade, but I also want to work together with partners across the DMV to ensure everyone benefits from what we're doing in our state. Transportation is the conduit to our future, and wise choices now will spur the economic prosperity we seek.

Wes Moore is the 63rd Governor of the state of Maryland. Born in Takoma Park, he is Maryland's first Black Governor. He built and launched a Baltimore-based business called BridgeEdU to aid underserved students for long-term success. He is a graduate of Valley Forge Military Academy and College, where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and of Johns Hopkins University, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa in international relations and economics. He was the first Black Rhodes Scholar in the history of Johns Hopkins and earned a Master's in international relations from Wolfson College at Oxford. In 2005, he deployed to Afghanistan as a captain with the 82nd Airborne Division, and served as a White House Fellow upon returning home.

Airports are flush with cash — Don't tax passengers more

By Rebecca Spicer, Airlines for America

If you have packed your bags, headed to the airport and boarded an airplane this summer, you know that air travel is back – and back with a vengeance! More than 4 million Americans took to the sky over the Independence Day weekend, and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) reported more than 2.8 million travelers cleared security on June 30 – setting a new record. U.S. airlines are staffed up and ready to meet this growing demand for air travel – in addition to demand for cargo shipments – with their largest workforce ever: 800,000 people all working for you—from pilots to cabin crew to gate agents, baggage handlers, maintenance technicians and more.

The good news for travelers is that robust brand competition is driving airfares down to historic lows. The intense competition among carriers – which vie aggressively against one another for consumers, whether first-time travelers or repeat customers – has given power to consumers, meaning travelers have vast selection when it comes to fare type and are empowered to choose the option best for their individual needs.

Additionally, airfares in the U.S. dropped more than 8% between May and June this year making air travel even more affordable for Americans, despite these inflationary times.

These lower fares help make air travel affordable and accessible for a wide range of travelers. It is remarkable to think that 90% of Americans have flown commercially at least once in their lifetime, and half have flown before their 16th birthday.

Unfortunately, some in Congress are trying to make it more expensive for families to fly with an unneeded increase in the airport tax, also known as the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC). Americans for Tax Reform recently called the PFC "one of the many government-imposed costs charged to the flying public that drive up ticket prices."

Considering that U.S. airports just received an additional $20 billion in federal grants under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, atop $20 billion in COVID relief funds, this is outrageous. Not to mention, there's currently a surplus in the Aviation Trust Fund. Airports are flush with cash, but hard-working American families certainly are not.

Buying four airline tickets means paying four times the airport tax. When the average family of four travels, they can currently pay $72 in airport taxes (or PFCs), a cost that airports are happy to hide in ticket prices. If a cap on the tax is doubled, as some have suggested, families will have to dole out $144 just to cover the cost of the PFC on a round trip, one-stop ticket. That's money families would rather be spending at Disney or the beach, not filling airports' coffers when it is least needed.

Already, some 20% of a typical airline ticket is folded-in government taxes and fees. In fact, U.S. government-imposed taxes on commercial aviation totaled around $20 billion (approximately $55 million per day) in 2022. Among the stated purposes of these taxes and fees are homeland security ($1 billion of that fee revenue goes to reduce the federal deficit), environmental protection, agriculture inspection, infrastructure enhancement, airport and airway operations and maintenance, and agency financing. U.S. and foreign taxes have grown in number, amount, and scope since their inception.

It's important to note that airport taxes, PFCs, are tacked on each time a passenger boards an aircraft during their travel. Travelers flying to smaller rural communities, which require a layover more often than not, will suffer a disproportionate amount of PFC increases in comparison to the rest of the traveling public who frequently has access to direct flights.

Raising taxes on all air travelers would go far beyond the airlines and airports. Hotels and restaurants would be impacted, as would local businesses and tourist destinations across the country. And who would feel it the hardest? Those hardworking employees and the traveling public. They should not be left holding the bag.

Every day, American consumers flex their muscle and vote with their wallets when they chose which airline to fly, which airfare to purchase and which location to visit. In a national survey, American consumers once again spoke loudly, with more than 80% opposing any increase to the PFC. American consumers know what they don't like – and they don't like an unnecessary, irresponsible increase in an onerous tax.

Rebecca Spicer is Senior Vice President of Communications at Airlines for America (A4A), which promotes safety, security and a healthy U.S. airline industry. A4A works collaboratively with airlines, labor, Congress, the Administration and other groups to improve aviation for the traveling and shipping public.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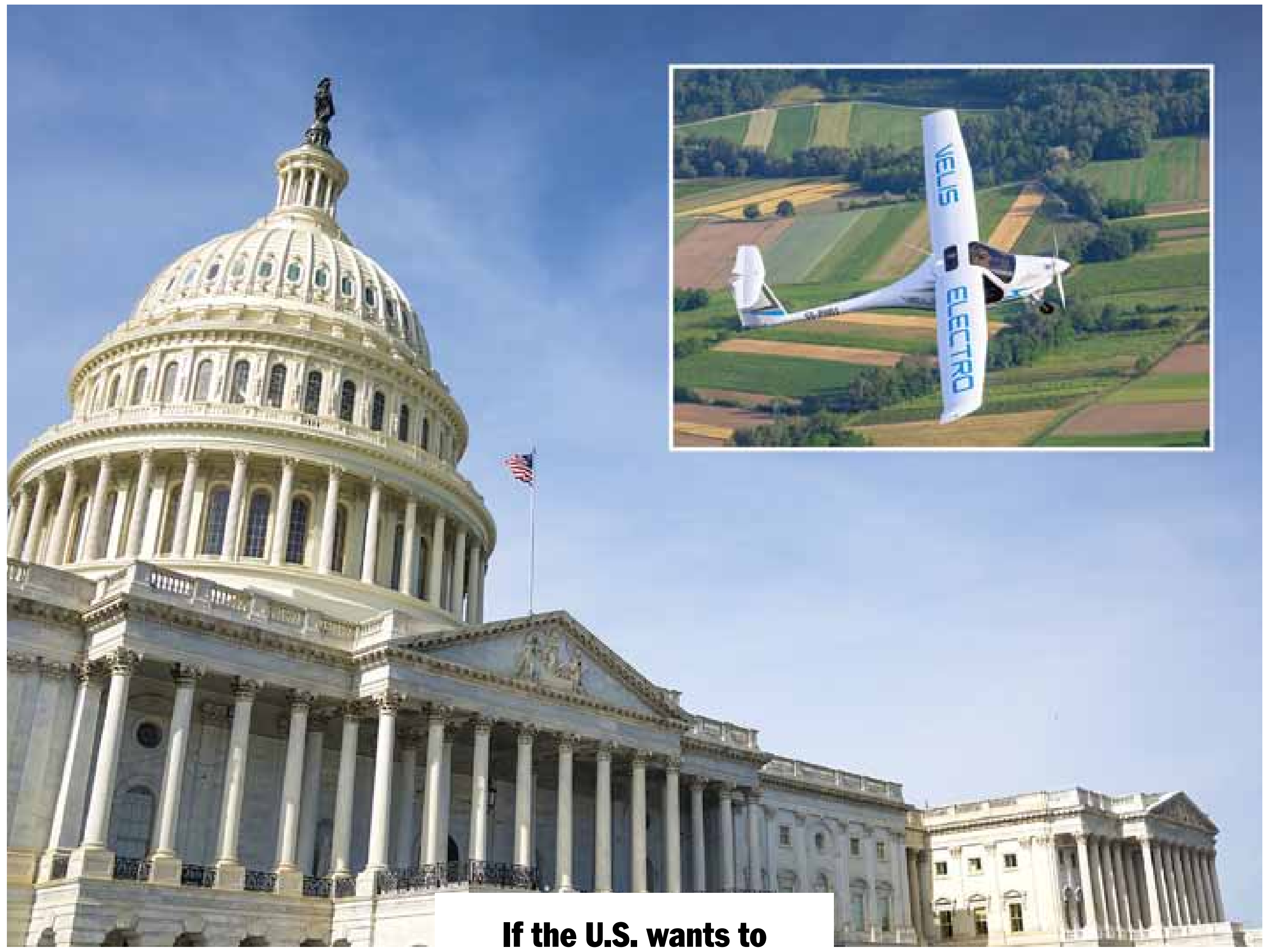
Cleared for takeoff: Creating a regulatory runway for Advanced Air Mobility



By U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran

America has led the way in aerospace innovation for a century. From the Wright brothers' first flight to landing Apollo 11 on the Moon, this nation has awed the world with new planes, rockets and aircraft.

As a result, the U.S. has long been the standard the rest of the world has followed when developing aviation design, safety and operational regulations.

However, when it comes to Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) – the newest innovations in the aviation industry – America is falling behind.

Textron eAviation's Pipistrel brand designed, built and certified the world's first electric aircraft – the Velis Electro. This new cutting-edge aircraft is certified in the European Union and the United Kingdom but currently only allowed to operate within the United States as an experimental aircraft due to a sluggish airworthiness process and lack of clearly defined regulations.

Losing ground in this industry means the U.S. is missing out on both the revenue generated by this industry and the capabilities provided by AAM.

AAM will provide opportunities to move people and cargo between places previously not served, or underserved, via aviation. These technologies allow for new methods of air travel, including the use of electric aircraft. In 2022 alone, the orders for AAM aircraft continued on an upward trajectory, generating $45 billion from these sales. Rural areas can also benefit from AAM where access to transportation and the movement of cargo is more limited.

AAM is an evolving and complex field of aviation which is great for industry competition, but challenging for an efficient airworthiness and certification process.

Last year, the Federal Aviation Administration changed how it will go about certifying these aircraft – a shift that led to delays and forced companies to reconsider their strategies on how best to get to market. Meanwhile, Chinese and European regulators have made quick progress, already publishing regulations for meeting airworthiness standards.

Congress and the FAA must continue to work together to set up consistent standards for the FAA to assess, certify and introduce new aircraft to the skies.

To help support this emerging industry, I introduced legislation to create an interagency working group of more than 15 federal departments and agencies with the goal of delivering a national strategy for AAM. This also creates invaluable dialogue amongst a wide group of government sectors to make certain the United States approaches this industry with uniformity. This past March, the Department of Transportation held its first meeting with representatives from across the industry.

The Senate also recently introduced the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023, which includes a provision to establish the Office of Advanced Aviation Technology and Innovation. This organization will consider new technological advancements and help provide answers to questions on airworthiness certificates, waivers, exemptions, or other operational authorizations.

If the U.S. wants to maintain its dominance and leadership in aerospace innovation, Congress must act quickly to pass the FAA Reauthorization Act with critical AAM provisions and confirm an experienced FAA Administrator.

Additionally, this bill includes provisions to alleviate a pronounced regulatory backlog at FAA and increase the transparency surrounding the development of regulatory materials. Unfortunately, none of this can happen until President Biden nominates an FAA Administrator. The FAA must have a leader with a steady hand at the helm.

If the U.S. wants to maintain its dominance and leadership in aerospace innovation, Congress must act quickly to pass the FAA Reauthorization Act with critical AAM provisions and confirm an experienced FAA Administrator. While Congress can help ensure resources, craft authorizing language and provide the FAA with most of the tools it needs to succeed, the agency must have a leader with a steady hand at the helm. The FAA has not had a permanent, Senate-approved leader for more than 450 days. The vacancy is having a ripple effect amongst a variety of offices within the FAA, including those that handle AAM.

As the United States looks to the next chapter of aviation, we must not fall behind.

Senator Jerry Moran, Kansas Republican, serves as the lead Republican on the Commerce Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation which allows him to conduct oversite on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and aviation programs of the Department of Transportation (DOT) with respect to economic regulation of air carriers and passenger airline service.

Let's allow experienced pilots to keep flying, training, and teaching the next generation

By U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn

Independence Day proved to be an enormous headache for Americans as travel returned to pre-pandemic levels. Thousands of flights were delayed before the holiday, leaving hundreds of thousands of families across the United States stranded. However, this latest aviation fiasco is just one in a series of failures for the airline industry. Since 2019, nearly half a million flights have been cancelled and over 1.7 million delayed, largely due to an industry-wide workforce shortage made worse by unnecessary federal regulations. The American people deserve better. Fortunately, this is a problem Congress can help fix.

Forcing pilots to retire at 65, even if they wish to continue flying, only impedes reliable air transportation in this country.

In March, alongside Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and a bipartisan group of senators, I introduced the Let Experienced Pilots Fly Act to address airline flight cancellations caused by pilot shortages. This legislation would raise the mandatory commercial pilot retirement age from 65 to 67, while ensuring pilots over the age of 65 maintain a first-class medical certification that must be renewed every six months. Raising the mandatory commercial pilot retirement age by two years would allow more experienced pilots to keep doing what they love and enable them to train younger recruits. Forcing pilots to retire at 65, even if they wish to continue flying, only impedes reliable air transportation in this country.

Despite Big Labor's assumption that raising the pilot age will negatively impact the safety of the flying public, the evidence points to the contrary. In 2007, the retirement age for pilots in the U.S. was raised from 60 to 65 after medical reports concluded age had an 'insignificant impact' on performance in the cockpit. The assertion that pilots are incapable of flying safely once they have reached the age of 65 ignores the objective metrics the industry uses to assess a pilot's competence in the cockpit.

The support for this common-sense proposition goes beyond lawmakers on Capitol Hill. I have had the pleasure of working with advocates who have taken a strong stance against the labor unions' status quo position. One group with which I have met several times, Raise the Age, consists of pilots who still want to fly but will be grounded solely due to their age. Collectively, they have millions of flight hours and hundreds of years of representational, safety, and managerial experience in the airline industry. Many of the group's members have even been directly involved in crafting today's aviation safety regulations, protocols, and negotiated agreements. These experienced professionals should have the option to keep flying.

Baby boomers represent half of the airline pilot population, which means that this problem will get worse if Congress does not act. If current regulations stand, nearly 50% of the qualified commercial workforce will have to retire in the next 15 years, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts an average of 18,100 openings each year over the next decade.

The pilot shortage is an issue we can no longer ignore. As we continue to debate the FAA Reauthorization in the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, I will push to include this legislation in the final bill. We need to ensure our nation's airspace is as accessible and safe as possible. Allowing experienced pilots to fly, train, and teach the next generation will be critical to making this a reality.

Senator Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee Republican, is the first woman to represent the state in the United States Senate. She serves on the Deputy Whip Team and is a member of the Finance Committee; the Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee; the Veterans Affairs Committee; and the Judiciary Committee. She serves as the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security and the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law. Before her election to the Senate, she represented Tennessee's Seventh Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. She dedicates her public service to promoting opportunities for women and making America a more prosperous place to live.

Time to modernize D.C. air travel & support consumers

By Ryan Costello, Capital Access Alliance

Washington, D.C., is home to a notorious distinction for air travelers.

It is more expensive to fly to Washington, D.C., than to fly to any other major metropolitan area in the United States. In fact, Dulles International Airport (IAD) was recently named "the most expensive airport in the country" with an average domestic ticket price of almost $500.

In addition, because many passengers have to make at least one connection when flying into Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), a recent study showed that DCA also has the highest carbon footprint per passenger among all airports in the top U.S. metro areas.

This year, Members of Congress in both parties have their sights set on addressing these issues by targeting an outdated federal regulation that applies to DCA and no other airport in the country. This unseemly bit of anti-competitive protectionism, officially known as "the perimeter rule" has resulted in sky-high airfares, fewer direct flight options, and more layovers when traveling to DCA.

Fortunately, there is bipartisan momentum for consumer-oriented reforms, and it couldn't come soon enough. As a former House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee member and Vice-Chair of the Aviation Subcommittee, I am proud to support this effort.

Since 1966, at the direction of Congress, the federal government has enforced a limit on the number of long-distance flights that can access DCA each day. The original goal of this intervention by Congress was to ensure a customer base for the newly built Dulles International Airport (IAD) in Loudoun County, Virginia. We can leave it to urban planners to debate whether government protectionism was ever necessary. Still, given Northern Virginia's population explosion over the last 20-plus years, and the reality that ten times more Americans are flying today versus 60 years ago, there's no question that it's time to take a fresh look in 2023.

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in both the House and Senate, which would allow additional flights to DCA to both in and beyond perimeter destinations. The airlines that currently serve DCA would be authorized to add a modest number of new flights on top of their existing service.

Of course, the debate over whether to open up DCA—like all policy debates—has become the subject of Capitol Hill politics, local politics, media speculation, and intense lobbying. Some airlines would like to keep limits on DCA to protect their current competitive advantage over flight routes. They are trying to defeat this bill for the simple reason that they oppose more competition. Some D.C.-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area Members of Congress would like to keep federal limits on DCA to continue propping up Dulles even as the data shows it is doing just fine.

Beltway media have a habit of covering public policy debates through the lens of who's winning and losing on K Street. But the real question is whether Congress will side with consumers or with the special interests invested in maintaining the status quo.

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in both the House and Senate, which would allow additional flights to DCA to both in and beyond perimeter destinations.

The status quo protectors have claimed that the House and Senate legislation could somehow threaten routes to DCA from smaller regional airports. Of course, this doesn't make sense. The bill is four pages long, and nowhere does it have language about any current flights—it only authorizes additional flights.

Here are some other facts:

We know that adding flights at DCA can be done safely. According to FAA data, DCA is well equipped to handle additional flights during multiple windows throughout the day. Former FAA Administrator Michael Huerta, who served under both Presidents Obama and Trump, has also made this argument in support. Additionally, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) recently completed a $1 billion terminal expansion at DCA, helping to facilitate thousands more daily passengers.

We also know that adding flights to DCA will benefit the people who call the capital region home. Greater tourism, for example, will bring greater economic activity, including tens of millions in tax revenue and more than 1,000 new jobs, according to a private sector study.

We know that adding flights to DCA is supported by the local community. According to polling data, most Virginia voters – including a majority in Northern Virginia – support this effort.

Some things from 1966 remain timeless, like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. But in our current age of innovation and competition, 1960's-era big government protectionism has outlived its usefulness. Demand for air travel is ten times higher than it was back then. It only makes sense for the perimeter rule to be adapted to better meet consumers' needs.

It's time to strengthen Washington's connectivity to the rest of the country, shed the distinction of notoriously high prices, and allow DCA to modernize like every other major airport.

Ryan Costello served as U.S. Representative for Pennsylvania's Sixth District from 2015 to 2019 where he served on the House Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation. He is a board member for the Capital Access Alliance.

It's Time to Modernize the Antiquated DCA Perimeter Rule

Air travelers deserve more choices, more competition & more affordable access to & from our nation's capital region.

This year, Congress has an opportunity to modernize a federally imposed 1960s-era regulation that is stifling competition and increasing prices for air travelers.

Washington, D.C. has the highest air travel ticket prices among top metropolitan areas nationwide, and Dulles International Airport (IAD) was recently named the "most expensive airport" in the country.

By authorizing a modest number of new flights, Congress can give air travelers - near and far - more choices and lower prices, while also protecting regional air service at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).

CapitalAccessAlliance.com

Bipartisan FAA reauthorization bill delivers reforms to keep U.S. as global aviation leader

By Chairman Sam Graves

This week, the House of Representatives is considering H.R. 3935, the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act. Introduced on June 9 by the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Aviation Subcommittee, this critical bipartisan legislation reauthorizes the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and aviation safety and infrastructure programs for the next five years.

Since the beginning of this Congress, my top legislative priority as the Committee Chairman has been the passage of comprehensive aviation legislation, and the bill unanimously approved by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee followed a series of hearings this year on various aviation issues and the solicitation of input from Members of Congress and the broad aviation stakeholder community.

For over a century, the United States has led the world in aviation safety and innovation, but our “gold standard” status is being threatened by increasing global competition, rapid developments in technology, a shortage of aviation professionals, and FAA’s own inefficiency.

Simply put, the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act addresses these issues and is critical to keeping America the global leader in aviation. It’s vital to our economy, to millions of jobs, and to the 850 million passengers that depend on our aviation system every year.

Due to bureaucratic hurdles, endless research, and pilot programs that are not leading to the development and incorporation of new technologies, China and other countries are beginning to surpass the United States.

Specifically, the bill makes targeted changes to the organizational structure of the FAA bureaucracy to improve overall efficiency and allow for innovation to flourish – all in a manner that will not harm the FAA’s ongoing regulatory efforts while simultaneously ensuring the agency is better organized to lead in an advanced aviation future.

Our legislation also takes important steps to strengthen America’s general aviation (GA) sector. Most of our aviation professionals, including pilots and mechanics, get their start in GA. This bill recognizes that the success of the United States aviation system is built upon a strong GA foundation and includes the first-ever GA title to secure our aviation industry’s long-term success.

We also work to address our aviation system’s shortage of qualified workers, including pilots, mechanics, and air traffic controllers. This legislation removes barriers to pursuing aviation careers, expands the aviation workforce pipeline, improves training standards, and more.

Airports connect our communities, create jobs, and drive economic growth in a way that no other mode of transportation can. If you build a mile of road, you can travel a mile, but if you build a runway, you can go anywhere in the world. That is why H.R. 3395 authorizes robust funding for airport infrastructure, including prioritizing investments for small and GA airports, and streamlining project delivery.

America has been a leader in aviation innovation. Unfortunately, due to bureaucratic hurdles, endless research, and pilot programs that are not leading to the development and incorporation of new technologies, China and other countries are beginning to surpass the United States. The Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act encourages the safe yet more efficient testing and integration of new technologies, such as drones and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), into the airspace.

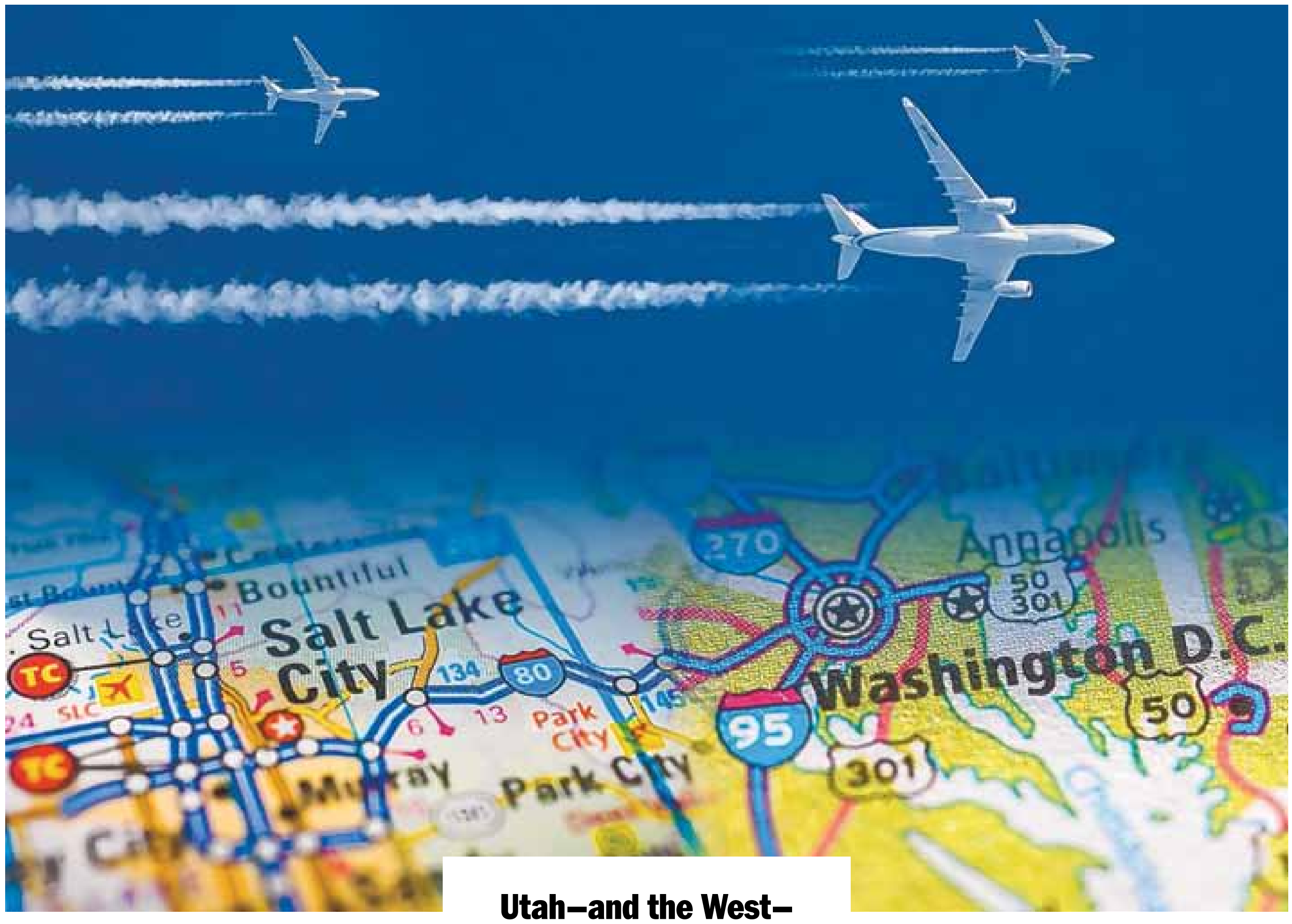
Enhancing the experience for the 850 million aviation passengers each year is another focal point of this legislation. While many parts of the aviation system typically function without incident despite a growing volume of travelers, one weak link in a trip can ruin a passenger’s experience. The bill delivers reforms that will enhance the experience for the traveling public.

Finally, as previously mentioned, America has long been the gold standard in aviation safety. While our aviation system remains safe, the system is not immune to stress and must always and continually be made safer. Our bill addresses important safety issues, including the recent uptick in runway incursions and a full reauthorization of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), to ensure the United States and the FAA remain the world’s gold standard in aviation safety.

This legislation is vital to the future of aviation in America, and I look forward to working with the Senate to send the bill to the President’s desk before the current law expires in September.

U.S. Representative Sam Graves, Missouri Republican, is the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and a professional pilot. His leadership on transportation policy has been instrumental to improve America’s highways, bridges, airports, waterways, ports and other infrastructure. He represents Missouri’s Sixth Congressional District, which includes the Missouri and the Mississippi Rivers as well as 34,000 highway miles and 10,400 bridges in need of maintenance and repairs.

Greater DCA access benefits businesses and families with increased competition and lower costs



By U.S. Rep. Burgess Owens

On May 10, 1869, from Ogden, Utah, a telegraph operator named W.N. Shilling announced the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad with a single-word notice: "Done!"

As the meeting point for the rail lines connecting the two coasts for the first time in our nation's history, Utah played a central role in the American economic miracle, the industrial revolution, and the rebirth of our Union post-Civil War.

More than a century later, our state remains a major hub for the Intermountain West region, boasting a prime geographic location, cutting-edge infrastructure, a pro-business environment, and a free market economy. With expansions at the Salt Lake International Airport, the 20th busiest airport in the nation, and the Utah Inland Port Authority, a one-of-a-kind development project connecting major national railways and multiple interstate freeways—Utah has become a world-class hub for travel, tourism, and industry.

To continue maximizing our regional economic impact and confront the challenges ahead, Utah—and the West—need a seat at the table in Washington, D.C. I am proud to be that voice as the first Utahn to serve on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in over 20 years. From responsibly managing water resources to ensuring today's workforce is well-trained for the jobs of tomorrow and making travel more efficient, affordable, and accessible, we have made significant progress for Utah and the West.

Despite Utah being a major hub for the Intermountain West region and having a robust business environment, with leading voices in nearly every industry, the number of direct flights from Salt Lake City to Washington, D.C., is severely limited compared to other major cities. A 60-year-old federally imposed perimeter rule means that Washington, D.C., has some of the highest domestic ticket prices in the nation, squeezing consumers and limiting choices.

That's why I'm leading the Direct Capital Access (DCA) Act, which aims to expand access and affordability for travelers commuting to D.C. The act will modernize the 60-year-old perimeter rule and add 7 flights at Reagan National Airport. It will also promote market competition, increase consumer choices, and lower airfare costs for families and businesses in Utah and across the nation traveling to and from Washington.

For growth to continue, we need a skilled workforce equipped to take on the jobs of tomorrow, like energy production. My district is home to Kennecott Copper Mine, the largest excavation and open-pit copper mine in the world. Utah is also home to the Spor Mountain Mine, the largest Beryllium producer worldwide, which harvests vital minerals for America's aerospace, defense, and energy industries. That's why I championed the Mining Schools Act, which aims to reverse a recent 21% decline in graduation rates for university and college mining and geological programs by supporting academic and professional programs that equip workers with the skills needed to compete in the global economy, unleashing American energy independence, and reducing our reliance on foreign adversaries for our energy needs.

Utah—and the West—need a seat at the table in Washington, D.C.

Across the West, farmers, ranchers, and industries are experiencing the worst drought in over 1,200 years, necessitating a collaborative approach to water management. Local elected officials, community members, policymakers in Washington, and all stakeholders must cooperate to improve water conservation efforts and combat shortages.

To address water management and harness Utah's innovative spirit, I supported the Water Data Act to replace out-of-date, hard-to-use information with real-time, accurate data to help communities in their ceaseless efforts to deliver and conserve water. I am also proud to support several initiatives to save the Great Salt Lake, like Rep. John Curtis' Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act and our delegation's Great Salt Lake Recovery Act, which bolster local efforts to preserve and maintain our state's precious water resources amid historic drought conditions.

154 years ago, the golden spike was driven to link Union Pacific Railroad and Central Pacific Railroad in Utah, spurring American economic ingenuity and dynamism. Our state's pioneering spirit, historical significance, and current economic standing highlight the need for strong representation in Washington, D.C. Together, we can ensure the Beehive State remains a driving force of American innovation into the 21st century.

U.S. Representative Burgess Owens, Utah Republican, serves on the House Transportation & Infrastructure and the Education & the Workforce Committees. He founded Second Chance 4 Youth, a non-profit to help troubled and incarcerated youth, prior to his Congressional service representing Utah's Fourth District. He was one of the first black athletes recruited to play football at the University of Miami and was the 13th pick in the first round of the 1973 NFL draft. His NFL career included a Superbowl win with the 1980 Oakland Raiders.

The bipartisan infrastructure law: A roadmap for getting things done

By U.S. Rep. Abigail Spanberger

When President Biden signed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law in November 2021, we celebrated. We celebrated a moment when both Democrats and Republicans sat down, hammered out differences, and delivered for the American people.

But getting a major physical infrastructure package — a broadly popular one, at that — across the finish line was not a foregone conclusion. When conversations started about a potential infrastructure deal during the Trump administration, many pundits and political analysts thought it couldn't get done.

The idea of "infrastructure week" became a running joke in the media. And for some lawmakers, it was much easier to be cynical. But thankfully, many Democrats and Republicans kept the faith.

In April 2021, I joined a summit in Annapolis, Maryland, hosted by then-Maryland Governor Larry Hogan (R). Our conversation included 25 governors, U.S. Senators, and U.S. Representatives. We met to discuss and debate many shared physical infrastructure priorities in several of our states. We heard from Republicans like U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) — and we heard from Democrats like U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV).

Additionally, Governors like then-Virginia Governor Ralph Northam (D) and Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards (D) discussed how potential transportation funding would benefit their states, as well as how they feared some of the bureaucratic hurdles ahead. By the end of the summit, we had heard perspectives from both parties, worked through disagreements, and arrived at a shared conclusion: we could get it done.

For the Virginians I represent, these transportation investments will mean faster commute times, safer and stronger bridges, more timely rail service, and new facilities at our regional airports.

Our initial framework focused on investments that would make "our communities more livable and enable us to more safely and efficiently move people, water, energy, and goods across America."

But it's easier to settle on priorities than to settle on an actual bill that can pass in both chambers of Congress. Getting the actual Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act through Congress was not easy. The final package was the result of months of negotiations — as well as feedback from local leaders, local Chambers of Commerce, and local unions. It was the result of making the case to our colleagues that this legislation was a priority for our constituents, our economy, and our transportation networks.

The bipartisan infrastructure law has already delivered $4.7 billion for Virginia alone. For the Virginians I represent, these transportation investments will mean faster commute times, safer and stronger bridges, more timely rail service, and new facilities at our regional airports. Rome can't be built in a day — but it's clear that Rome's construction is well underway.

Over the last few months, I've toured road projects that are going to clear up congestion — so that Virginians can get to work, school, and home faster. I've toured bridges that are finally going to get the repairs they need — so that Virginians can know they are safe. And just last month, I was in Spotsylvania County to celebrate a major investment in making our rail crossings safer — so that Virginians can avoid tragic accidents.

My job is to get things done for the people I serve, and I was proud to be a part of delivering transportation funding to Virginia through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Going forward, the process behind the law gives us a roadmap for how we can still work together, even as we find ourselves in a new era of divided government in Washington, D.C.

With this spirit of cooperation, I hope we can have many more "infrastructure weeks" in the future.

U.S. Representative Abigail Spanberger, Virginia Democrat, serves on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and House Agriculture Committee, where she is Ranking Member of the Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology Subcommittee. Representing the Commonwealth's Seventh Congressional District, she is also a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus. The nonpartisan Lugar Center ranked her the most bipartisan Member of Virginia's congressional delegation. Prior to the U.S. House, she served as a federal agent with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and as a case officer with the CIA.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Where are we going next?

By U.S. Rep. Brian Babin

As Chairman of the House Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, one question I am regularly asked is, "In space, where are we going next?" My answer is always the same, "It depends." I will give you a better answer, but first, let's look at where we've been.

We can accomplish tremendous things if politicians give the space community constancy of purpose and if the bureaucrats stop overregulating.

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Rocket launch at night from Kennedy Space Center, Merritt Island, Florida.

On December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers successfully took flight for the first time in history. Just 66 years later, millions sat around their television sets and radios as Neil Armstrong unforgettably declared, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." In less than one lifetime, humanity witnessed our first flight to our first step on another celestial body.

And we did it five more times. Less than two and a half years after Apollo 11, America landed ten more men on the Moon. Since then, we have witnessed incredible achievements, like the Space Shuttle Program sending more than 350 astronauts to space and the International Space Station (ISS) demonstrating that humanity can continuously live and work in space for more than 20 years.

The private sector has always been a critical partner in our space exploration achievements. Today, we are seeing an even greater number of new commercial space providers who have proven themselves more than capable of achieving the extraordinary. But don't forget; this is still a nascent industry – we are still learning.

Here begins the "it depends" part of my answer...

If we over-regulate the industry now, we risk that these companies will only innovate for regulatory compliance. We've seen this before; just look at the airline industry. After the 1956 Grand Canyon mid-air collision, legislation was passed establishing the FAA – the safety improvements were drastic, and mid-air collisions reduced dramatically.

Unfortunately, in large part, so has the innovation. Don't get me wrong, safety improvements were needed, and many lives have been saved as a result. Our engines may be more efficient now, but our flights fly at about the same speed as they did in the 1960s, only with cramped seats and, frustratingly, more time on the tarmac. That's not innovation.

Since air travel has become a common form of transportation, increased safety regulation is a good thing, but imagine if the FAA existed in 1903 and created onerous regulations immediately after history was made at Kitty Hawk, NC. My bet is that we wouldn't see the tremendous strides made in our space industry – including not walking on the Moon.

My point is that when it comes to space, the position we are in right now is closer to Kitty Hawk. It is incumbent upon us to allow innovation to flourish, and as a result, we will see great strides in exploration.

So where are we now?

Last year, NASA launched Artemis I to the Moon and back, marking the critical first step in a series of increasingly complex missions that will expand the bounds of human exploration and knowledge for decades to come. In the near term, NASA promises the Moon with its sights set firmly on Mars.

Much of the work for Artemis I took place at NASA's Johnson Space Center (JSC) – the global epicenter of human space exploration, which I am proud to represent in Congress. JSC is an excellent example of collaborative commercial partnerships, with their civil servant and contractor workforce anchoring cutting-edge space activity in the Houston area and attracting private sector investment from across the country.

And look at what these commercial partners have accomplished. We are seeing private companies fly to the ISS, build lunar landers, and unveil new exploration opportunities. Some are even developing plans for privately owned space stations in low-earth orbit, while others are designing the next generation of space suits.

If we allow these companies to innovate, they can drive down costs, increase competition, and accelerate schedules. By leveraging these partnerships, NASA could focus more resources on scientific research and development.

But these partnerships will lose their strategic value if we do not find a regulatory balance that will allow innovative pioneers to push the bounds on where we can go and what we can do. If we don't, we risk jeopardizing American leadership in space.

Burdensome regulation will send us backward, not propel us forward. We can accomplish tremendous things if politicians give the space community constancy of purpose and if the bureaucrats stop overregulating. Couple this with increased collaboration between civil and commercial space leadership and their unparalleled expertise; we can't begin to imagine the potential.

But back to the question of "Where are we going next?" If we maintain a light regulatory touch, the true answer is even more romantic than a specific destination: We can go anywhere we want.

U.S. Representative Brian Babin, Texas Republican, serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, where he serves as Chairman of the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee. A lifelong resident of East Texas, he represents the state's 36th Congressional District, home to NASA's Johnson Space Center, four deepwater ports, and numerous oil and gas refineries.

A strong commercial space industry secures America's future

By U.S. Rep. Bill Posey

The United States remains the only nation to have landed humans on the Moon and returned them safely to Earth. It is among the greatest achievements in human history, and it has significantly contributed to America's leadership on the world stage. As a young man I had the opportunity of working on the Apollo program as an inspector with McDonnell Douglas. It was an exciting experience, and I am both grateful and humbled to have been a part of it.

The success of the Apollo Missions led to other significant accomplishments like building reusable Space Shuttles to test the limits of human space flight, prolonged robotic exploration of Mars, deploying a space-based telescope that can see far beyond our solar system, and conducting scientific research on the International Space Station. In more recent years we've seen an explosion in commercial space activity which has culminated in private companies conducting successful human space launches. This too is a significant milestone.

Our investment in space is critical to our national security, scientific discovery, technological advancement, and economic competitiveness. So much of our modern-day life is dependent on space – making a bank transaction, for example, or even a phone call, these days requires using some type of space-faring technology. And while NASA's leadership of our space efforts will continue to be indispensable, the U.S. commercial space industry's role in space exploration will grow larger and more critical. American companies must continue to lead the way.

During the 1980's, the United States had nearly 100% of the launch market. Gradually more nations entered the space race, and while our competitors were courting new business and subsidizing launches from their facilities, the United States overregulated its market making it more costly and cumbersome to do launches. One CEO complained to me he couldn't get in to view the launch of his company's multi-million-dollar payload. By 2010, the U.S. had conducted just 20% of the world's 76 launches.

To help regain our foothold, in 2015, Congress passed into law the bipartisan U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act which created a legal framework for allowing commercial space companies to experiment with space launch activities and designated an 8-year learning period to help get the industry off the ground. I was pleased to work on this bipartisan legislation with, among others, now-Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Senator Ted Cruz, Representative Brian Babin, and current House Science Committee Chairman Frank Lucas.

Specifically, our legislation streamlined the regulatory process to eliminate unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy impeding the development of the commercial space sector to make U.S. space companies, and our launch market, more competitive. The bill also included my bipartisan, bicameral proposal to provide legal protections for American space companies that develop and obtain resources from space.

Our investment in space is critical to our national security, scientific discovery, technological advancement, and economic competitiveness.

Rare minerals necessary to modern technology such as nickel, iron, cobalt, and platinum group metals, can be found within celestial bodies.

Our commercial space bill has been incredibly successful as the United States has been capturing back much of the launch market it lost. Last year the U.S. took the lead and conducted 42% of the world's 180 launches. It's important for Congress to reauthorize the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act and extend the learning period. This is a robust industry that has yet to reach its full potential.

Adversarial countries like China, who don't play by the rules, are working to hollow out our commercial space industry. The 2019 Report to Congress of the U.S. – China Economic and Security Review Commission states that "China is taking steps to establish a commanding position in the commercial launch and satellite sectors relying in part on aggressive state-backed financing that foreign market driven companies cannot match." The report further adds, "China has already succeeded in undercutting some U.S. and other foreign launch and satellite providers in the international market, threatening to hollow out these countries' space industrial bases." We can't allow that to happen.

To help level the playing field, Senator Marco Rubio and I have introduced the bipartisan American Space Commerce Act to extend existing space launch tax incentives for an additional ten years for payload and launch companies that launch from the United States. By doing this our bill frees up more capital for American space companies to invest in new technology and launching future space missions from the United States.

In the short-term our investment in space is essential to the survival of our nation and the free world. One day in the future, the survival of our species may depend on our ability to leave planet Earth. It's important we lay the groundwork for both.

U.S. Representative Bill Posey, Florida Republican, is a senior member of the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space & Technology. He also serves on the Financial Services Committee and the House Republican Study Committee. He represents Florida's Eighth Congressional District which includes the Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral Space Force Station and Patrick Space Force Base.