

STATEMENT OF LEONARD L. GRIGGS, JR., ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR AIRPORTS, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, CONCERNING AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS. SEPTEMBER 8, 1990.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Len Griggs, FAA's Assistant Administrator for Airports. I am responsible for overseeing the FAA's airport grant program which provides airport development assistance to communities such as this throughout the Nation. I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the aviation infrastructure needs of northwest Arkansas.

The FAA's airport grant program, which is authorized by this Committee, has been a key factor in making available substantial assistance to airports throughout the country. Since the enactment of the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982, we have issued nearly 10,000 grants for \$8.98 Billion to help finance airport development and planning projects at our Nation's airports. This has included funding for land acquisition, runways, taxiways, aprons, safety and security equipment, noise mitigation, and terminal buildings. The largest portion of the program--51%--has been for pavement construction and reconstruction which adds to the safety and integrity of the airport system. Of course, safety and capacity enhancement are

key objectives of the program with projects contributing to safety accounting for 39.5% of the total and capacity for 49.1%. The remaining amount--11.4%--has gone for planning and noise mitigation projects. For the current fiscal year, our grant program level is \$1.425 Billion.

There remains a pressing need for a strong airport program today, particularly with the capacity problems our national aviation system is experiencing in many areas of the country. There is a clear need for significant capital improvements to increase capacity if we are to meet the growing demands of the traveling public.

Our National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems lists more than 3,200 current airports and over 400 proposed new airports with multi-billion dollar needs. Traditionally, state and local authorities have funded about 70% of airport development needs. Secretary Skinner's National Transportation Policy recognizes that a continued strong local presence in planning and financing airport development is critical. Additionally, we have supported and the House of Representatives has passed legislation that includes a Passenger Facility Charge which would provide local communities the option of charging airline passengers a modest fee to assist in financing local airport-related projects.

Aviation is a cornerstone of economic vitality in the United States, and this is certainly the case in Arkansas. Since 1982, through airport improvement program grants, a total of \$90.6 Million has been approved for airports in Arkansas. Of this total, \$39.4 Million was in entitlement funds; the remaining \$51.2 Million was from discretionary funds made available to the FAA by the Congress.

Aviation--both air carrier and general aviation--is particularly important in northwest Arkansas, where the highway system requires time-consuming travel through small towns and, in some cases, mountainous terrain. It is clear that a modern, well-maintained system of airports is important to foster the timely and efficient transportation of people and goods through this region.

There are nine existing airports in northwest Arkansas. Two of these airports are primary airports with air carrier service; the remaining seven are general aviation facilities. Four of these airports have received more than \$1 Million in airport grant funds from Fiscal Year 1982 through the end of August 1990:

Fayetteville (\$4.74 Million); Fort Smith (\$6.32 Million); Rogers (\$3.94 Million); and Springdale (\$1.97 Million).

There are also a variety of ongoing and planned projects at the nine airports in northwest Arkansas. At Fayetteville, we have a

multi-year grant (FY 89-91) of \$1.25 Million for obstruction removal, safety area improvements, and an aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicle. We anticipate that the airport may be undertaking additional work in FY 91 for an extended safety area and a helipad, and an FY 92 project for taxiway and apron improvements. At Fort Smith, there is a multi-year grant (FY 90-92) of \$1.7 Million for taxiway reconstruction and runway lighting. Bentonville has a current airport master plan underway under a \$13,000 grant, and as a result of that study may initiate a runway extension project in the future.

At Berryville, we anticipate the airport may undertake a project in FY 92 to extend and widen the runway. We expect a forthcoming project at Harrison to expand the apron and strengthen the runway in FY 93-95. At Russellville, a planning study is anticipated in FY 92. We expect to see a project in FY 91 at Siloam Springs to reconstruct an apron and taxiway. And at Springdale, we anticipate an FY 92 project for land purchase and apron construction, and a project in FY 93-94 to reconstruct the runway and taxiway. Clearly, the aviation officials in this area are working hard to upgrade and modernize their facilities to better serve the traveling public.

Under our Facilities and Equipment Program, which is also authorized by this Committee, we have scheduled an ASR-9 airport surveillance radar for delivery to the Fayetteville area during

July 1992. This state-of-the-art radar will be located in the vicinity of the Fayetteville Airport and will be used to provide radar air traffic control services for those airports within approximately 40 miles of Fayetteville. Radar data will be remoted from Fayetteville to the Fort Smith Airport air traffic control tower.

In closing, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I want to stress that we in the FAA recognize the importance of a strong aviation infrastructure in areas such as northwest Arkansas. And we also recognize the important contributions that areas such as northwest Arkansas, in turn, make to our national air transportation system.

We in the aviation community have been truly fortunate to have key allies in the Congress who recognize these needs as well, and we have all profited from the firm leadership shown by this Committee in helping us attain critical resources to meet the needs of aviation here in Arkansas and throughout the Nation. You may be assured of our willingness to work with the aviation community here in Arkansas and with this Committee to assure that we continue to address the needs of aviation at the local and national levels as we head into the 21st century.

That completes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have at this time.