



RICK ETTER

Airports Acquisition Specialist
Federal Aviation Administration

What programs are the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) currently focused on?

The FAA's mission is to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world. Over the last three years, more than two billion people flew on commercial jet aircraft in the United States without experiencing a single fatality.

As described in the FAA current business plan, "Flight Plan 2006-2010," the FAA's goals to accomplish and maintain its mission are:

- **Increased Safety.** Safety isn't just a public interest priority; it's also an economic necessity. People fly only if they feel safe. They must trust the system and their trust must be upheld by constantly improving performance.
- **Greater Capacity to Meet the Public's Demand for Air Travel.** Increased capacity is a double-edged sword. Air traffic is increasing rapidly to accommodate the public demand, but growth must not interfere with the passengers' ability to reach their destinations on time. In addition, this growth and expansion of the nation's airports must not be done at the expense of the environment or the rights of property owners and displaced persons.
- **International Leadership.** Worldwide aviation is a \$1.4 trillion business. Given the FAA's expertise in the operation of the world's largest and most complex system, it's clear that in the aviation industry, safety and efficiency is our most vital national export. We will enhance the U.S. leadership role by sharing expertise and new technologies with our international partners. We aim to raise the level of safety everywhere planes fly.
- **Organizational Excellence.** The FAA must continually improve the way we train our employees and manage our finances. Last year's achievements are the benchmark for the next. This requires greater fiscal responsibility, stronger leadership, more cooperation, improved customer service and performance-based management. Simply put, we need to operate like the world's finest bottom-line, cost-driven enterprise with top quality results.

How does the FAA know whether it is meeting its goals?

We account and measure the results in all FAA offices (lines of business). In my case, the land acquisition effort for the FAA airport programs is accountable to all these larger goals. I work for the FAA's Office of Airports whose mission is to maintain and develop the nation's airports. As an organization, the Office of Airports (Airports) provides leadership to the airport and aviation community to ensure that the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) is planned and developed to meet FAA mission goals. The NPIAS identifies, for Congress and the public, the composition of a national system of airports together with the airport development and costs necessary over the next 10 years.

The major business challenge for Airports is to improve the safety, capacity, and condition of U.S. airports by maintaining a level of investment for airport infrastructure projects that benefits the national airspace system. Airports has a continuing stake in the safety, security, capacity, financial and environmental aspects of airports.

What are the FAA's Airport Programs?

The top priority for the FAA Airports is to increase the capacity of the nation's airspace and to ensure and improve safety standards at the nation's airports. Congress and the FAA have identified 30 airports where new runways and other airfield improvements will increase capacity in the aviation transportation system to meet the needs of the traveling public. In 2005, roughly 500 million air passengers flew, and by 2011, this number is expected to increase to almost one billion. The planned new runways are intended to serve this increasing demand. For this airport capacity, expansion land will need to be acquired, and as necessary, people displaced will need to relocate to their replacement homes and businesses. This acquisition and relocation work must be conducted in compliance with the Federal Uniform Act (49 CFR 24) requirements.



In addition, we have an ongoing noise compatibility program available to eligible airports. This program is commonly known as the “Part 150” Noise Compatibility Planning Program. Under this program, an airport may undertake various noise mitigation and abatement measures as part of an airport Noise Compatibility Planning effort. The intent of the program is for the airport sponsor to improve the airport noise environment and to work to reduce incompatible land use affected by airport noise. Airport participation in this program is voluntary and currently roughly 200 of the nation’s airports have developed Noise Compatibility Programs (NCP) under the FAA program.

Corrective or preventative land use mitigation measures under an approved NCP may include sound insulation of homes, assistance to sell a home, or the acquisition of noise impacted homes and relocation of the homeowner to a comparable replacement home located outside of the airport noise. The airport and the affected communities will select their mitigation measures as they develop a NCP under the Part 150 process.

How is FAA’s funding allocated?

The FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides the nation’s airports with financial assistance for the airport development and airport noise compatibility planning programs. There are roughly 3,400 airports in the U.S. eligible to receive AIP funding for airport planning and development. In addition to AIP funding, the FAA’s Office of Airports manages the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) program and authorizes airports to collect up to \$4.50 on each airline ticket (segment) to fund airport programs.

Since the demand for AIP funds exceeds the availability, the FAA bases distribution of these funds on present national priorities and objectives. AIP funds are typically first apportioned into major entitlement categories such as primary commercial service airport, cargo airports and general aviation. The remaining funds are distributed to a discretionary fund. Set-aside projects (e.g. airport noise compatibility) receive first attention from this discretionary distribution. The remaining funds are true discretionary funds that are distributed according to a national prioritization of aviation needs formula.

The combined funding from AIP grants and PFC provides roughly \$6 billion annually to assist eligible airport projects. The AIP-funded work requires roughly \$500 million in land acquisition and relocation assistance annually. Any land acquisition or relocation assistance necessary for an AIP-funded airport project must meet Uniform Act (49 CFR 24) requirements.

How are projects approved?

The Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP) is the FAA’s planning program to identify the critical airport projects for AIP funding. The FAA first identifies airports that are significant to national air transportation through the development of the NPIAS. Then the ACIP provides the specific project details and anticipated sources of funds for the proposed development expected to be undertaken within the next three to five years.

How does FAA monitor an airport owner’s grant funded work?

Prior to the FAA funding or accepting work, the airport sponsor must certify to the FAA that it has met all the Federal requirements involved with the project. The airport sponsor will support its certification with assurance of its capability to perform and adequately document its compliance. The FAA will review and inspect airports for compliance with these grant assurances and certifications. A lack of compliance may involve funding and legal sanctions that the FAA may enforce under its authorizing statutes. An airport must certify and be able to show compliance to the Uniform Act for any FAA-assisted project that requires the acquisition of real property and/or the displacement of persons from their homes or business.

In addition to the acceptance of project work, the grant obligations require airports to maintain minimum standards and continue to operate as public use airports. If land acquired with federal funds or transferred to the airport by the U.S. Government (war surplus land), the airport is obligated in perpetuity to continue its aeronautical use of the property. Any change in the use of the obligated property would require an FAA release of the land. If approved for release, the airport land may be transferred to non-aeronautical use with payment to the airport at the current fair market value of the property.

What is your primary goal?

My primary focus is on the continual improvement on airport land acquisition programs. The Uniform Act compliance is the first requirement and program efficiency and economy is the primary goal. Also, the FAA, in partnership with its airport sponsors, will be taking the necessary action to implement the re-use and redevelopment of acquired noise land. We expect to return several hundred parcels of acquired land back to productive use following redevelopment to a land use compatible with the surrounding airport and the overflight of the property.



What are the challenges you're facing?

Uniform Act compliance and efficient programs require competent project management and expert professional acquisition and relocation staffs. This is the obligation of the airport grant recipient (airport sponsor) to meet when accepting FAA assistance. The airport development process is a rather lengthy and expensive process, and it is necessary that the land acquisition and relocation assistance requirements are fully considered throughout.

Land acquisition and relocation assistance itself is a complex task that requires significant advance planning and adequate lead time to complete successfully. Problems do arise where this advance planning for the land acquisition requirements are not adequate. In these cases, there is a loss of time and possibly resources (grant and local funding), as eligible airport projects and programs need to "catch up" to provide for acceptable property acquisition and the needed relocation program.

Land acquisition and relocation assistance necessary for an AIP airport project must comply with the Uniform Act. Our FAA airports region and airports district and program offices have direct oversight and provide needed technical assistance for any airport sponsor who may want to benefit from the AIP program. Where land acquisition is necessary for an AIP assisted project, the airport sponsor may contact their FAA project manager to ensure they properly plan and conduct their land acquisition project. A project is not ready for AIP grant funding until the planning, environmental and land acquisition requirements are met. Many of our project managers and region land subject matter experts have attended IRWA conferences and training courses to improve their skills and knowledge of acquisition and relocation assistance requirements.

How can IRWA and ROW professionals help you achieve your goals?

The FAA Office of Airports and the IRWA have an ongoing partnership to promote professionalism and competence on airport land projects. The FAA and its airport sponsors need the qualified and expert professionals to carry out these programs. The IRWA continues to provide the needed educational and professional development resources to ensure a supply of competent and expert professionals now and in the future. Also, through IRWA course offerings, conferences and seminars, there is a ready venue to promote the FAA Airport program needs to the IRWA membership of dedicated and expert professionals. The IRWA formal courses and other education resources provide a good foundation in the technical skills and knowledge needed to be successful on airport land projects.

“ There are roughly 3,400 airports in the U.S. eligible to receive AIP funding for airport planning and development ”

Which FAA programs and outreach most benefit the right of way professional?

When working on airport land projects it is important that the right of way professional knows their client's needs and goals. The FAA project manager at the local FAA Airports District or Region office is the primary resource to assist his/her airport sponsors with FAA grant funding and other programs. Attending annual FAA regional airports conferences is a good place to become familiar with FAA's airports staff, and to learn more about funding and the technical relationship between the FAA and airport sponsor. These conferences are presented by most of our airport regional offices (see www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/ for information on FAA Airports Region offices and scheduled conferences). Also, when questions do arise on airport projects, the FAA project manager is the best resource for the airport sponsor to get questions answered, solutions confirmed and needed technical assistance on land acquisition and relocation issues.

The FAA's Office of Airports also provides two guidance publications for Uniform Act compliance. The FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5100-17 Change 6 provides procedural guidance and sample documentation formats to assist airport sponsors develop their land acquisition programs. Also, the FAA Order 5100.37B is available and provides FAA field offices the acceptance standards for land acquisition and relocation assistance work. Both of these were recently updated to include the 2005 revisions to the Federal regulation 49 CFR Part 24 and generally to update and streamline the guidance.

These publications are available for download at: www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/environmental/relocation_assistance/

Where can additional information regarding FAA programs be found?

On our website at www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/ you can review additional information on all the above airport programs and topics, and locate your local FAA project manager.