

United States Congress

WASHINGTON, DC

July 30, 2021

Administrator Steve Dickson
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Dickson:

We write in support of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) strategic plan to accelerate and expand the deployment of innovative technologies that will enhance the safety and performance of the nation's aviation systems, including those in Ohio. The Ohio Remote Tower (R-TWR) Innovation Program would enable greater integration between aircraft and emerging technologies, including drones and autonomous vehicles. The R-TWR, together with Ohio's long tradition of proving and demonstrating aviation technologies, would enable the state to serve as an FAA test bed for integrating new technologies into the National Airspace System (NAS). We urge the FAA to continue its critical support for the remote tower program.

The fiscal year 2021 omnibus appropriations bill included \$19 million in the FAA's Facilities and Equipment account for the Enterprise, Concept Development, Human Factors, and Demonstrations Portfolio. As you consider the demonstration of innovative technology, we urge you to consider the programs that have been developed by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and its state partners. In addition to R-TWR, these programs include Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL), workforce development (for controllers, pilots, and maintenance technicians), and other emerging areas. In undertaking these programs, Ohio can serve as an FAA test bed for developing and proving these innovative technologies for the NAS.

This ODOT initiative, in partnership with Ohio-based universities, the state economic development organization, and other stakeholders, will provide several benefits that align with FAA's strategic initiatives for laying the foundation for the aerospace system of the future. One major element is the creation of an ecosystem to support the research, testing, and deployment of VTOL aircraft in support of the commercial market for advanced air mobility vehicles. It will also support the demonstration of R-TWR applications at multiple airport sites through a centralized facility. This technology has the potential to improve equitable access for more advanced airport operations at both smaller and rural airports.

We believe that in addition to innovation, the R-TWR program will provide economic opportunities which support the FAA's workforce development plans. Universities and technical schools would develop future controllers, pilots, and maintenance technicians, expanding the national aviation workforce. The program would also enhance the safety of pilot and air traffic control training by utilizing a controlled tower environment.

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We believe the State of Ohio is well-positioned to serve as a partner with the FAA, and we stand ready to work with your agency in developing and proving new and emerging technologies for the NAS. We ask that you communicate directly with ODOT, and keep our offices informed as you move forward on your strategic initiatives to accelerate the deployment of these innovative technologies.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Rob Portman
United States Senator



Joyce Beatty
United States Representative



Anthony Gonzalez
United States Representative



Tim Ryan
United States Representative



Steve Chabot
United States Representative



Michael R. Turner
United States Representative



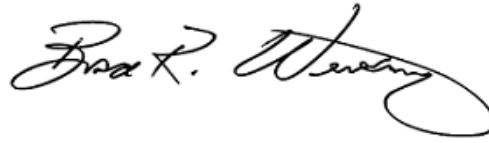
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