

In this year of celebration, many continue to marvel at the accomplishments of the Wright Brothers. These became more apparent on December 17, 2003, when many witnessed the attempts to reenact the first flight. What is also noteworthy is that powered flight was preceded with years of careful testing, first with gliders and then power. As with many things in aviation, successes often do not occur overnight, but are the results of a lot of research, planning, and then implementation. Likewise, the Regional Airport Plan lays out a strategy to make improvements to the airport system, often over many years.

Change is another certainty in aviation. This past year, the FAA had been supporting airport security requirements, until the responsibility was shifted to the Department of Homeland Security. We have the new Vision 100 reauthorization legislation, and the FAA is transitioning to the performance-based Air Traffic Organization (ATO). These changes are significant and demand that we keep our eye on continually improving the safety and efficiency of the aviation system, rather than being preoccupied with the process of change.

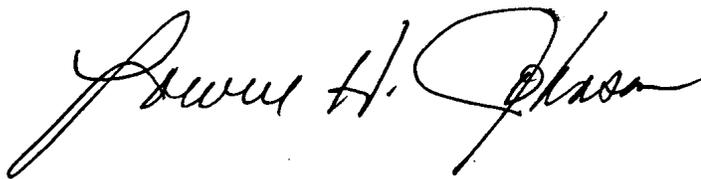
The FAA published Flight Plan 2004-2008 last fall, to clearly inform the public and FAA employees of objectives we need to achieve over the short term to increase safety, add capacity, and achieve organizational excellence. It also recognizes our need to excel in the international arena.

This RAP supports the Flight Plan and is, we believe, essential in laying out an agenda for airport capital development, and providing a baseline to measure progress. We remain committed to the initiatives we have started in the past and continue to refine others to make them work better for all. The basic objectives, improve safety, add capacity, provide standard airfield configurations, improve airport-community compatibility, and protect the federal investment, remain the foundation for this plan. A notable change is the lack of discussion about airport security. We do not have a specific initiative, since Homeland Security now primarily funds this. The FAA remains strongly committed to improved security, but will not have the funding role seen in the past.

This RAP edition is not significantly different from prior versions, but worth careful review. The first chapter provides the foundation for the initiatives discussed in chapter 2. The third chapter covers funding, and the appendices provide lots of information about airports and aeronautical activity in this region. It is a good reference, and one that I use throughout the year.

As we must remind everyone, there can be no guarantees for specific project approvals or grant assistance. National direction, program authorizations, and annual appropriations can and will influence schedules and project accomplishment. Even with these unknowns, we remain optimistic that we will be able to continue to help airport sponsors in making measurable improvements to the airport system.

Let us know how we can make this plan even more useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James H. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".