

# **Bulletin 1: BEST PRACTICES-SURFACE ACCESS TO AIRPORTS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

A primary goal of all modes of transportation is the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Transportation is conducted through two basic facilities, terminals (nodes) and routes (segments). Airports are terminals that connect surface access segments with airway segments. To meet this role, airports must always be considered critical elements of the total transportation system.

Airport sponsors and the FAA have been effective in coordinating individual airport surface access projects with transportation agencies, such as State Departments of Transportation (DOT) and transit operators. This bulletin will provide information to facilitate future coordination with surface transportation agencies. It will also identify current and future research in the planning and design of airport surface access facilities related to terminal curbside, access roads, and pedestrian walkways.

The following topics are addressed herein:

Section A: Use of PFC, AIP, and airport revenue for airport ground access projects

Section B: Coordination of airport access needs with surface transportation agencies

Section C: Summary of useful resource documents

Section D: Research projects for airport surface access planning and design

Bulletins on airport surface access best practices will be issued periodically as research studies are completed and additional information is gained from coordination with surface transportation agencies.

The terms “surface access” and “ground access” are used interchangeably in this bulletin. “Surface access” is the more comprehensive term as it includes ground access and water access (i.e. ferry boats). However, the term “ground access” is used in other FAA guidance, and is used herein when referring to that guidance. For the purpose of this bulletin, ground access will include water access.

This guidance is intended principally for FAA regional Airports divisions and Airport District Office staff. FAA regional or field offices should provide a copy of Section B (only) to all airport sponsors. The guidance of Section B should be discussed at the pre-planning meetings for airport master plans.

## **SECTION A: USE OF PFC, AIP, AIRPORT REVENUE FOR AIRPORT GROUND ACCESS PROJECTS**

FAA regional Airport divisions and Airport District Offices should coordinate all substantial airport surface access projects with APP-500, and under certain circumstances, AAS-100. This includes all new or expanded rail lines, bus-ways, light rail lines, ferry terminals, transportation centers, and connections to interstate or interstate type highways, or other major surface arterials that provide access to an airport.

### **1). Use of PFC Funds for Ground Access Projects**

FAA policy on the eligibility of airport ground access projects for PFC financial participation is contained on pages 6366-6371 of the *Federal Register Notice* dated February 10, 2004. This *Federal Register Notice* is appended to this bulletin.

Questions, please contact APP-500 (Airports Financial Assistance Division)

### **2). Use of AIP Funds for Ground Access Projects**

Eligibility decisions often depend on the specifics of the project. This discussion provides general guidance.

Current guidance on AIP eligibility for access roads is found in FAA Order 5100.38C, AIP Handbook, Paragraph 620.a. Current guidance on AIP eligibility for rapid transit systems is found in Paragraph 622 of the AIP Handbook.

The Federal Register Notice of February 10, 2004 (see Appendix) should also be consulted for AIP eligibility of airport surface access projects. AIP eligibility for such projects conforms to that for PFC projects, except for those provisions (i.e. significant contribution) exclusive to the PFC program.

In several recent PFC decisions based on AIP eligibility, the agency has approved applications for PFC funding of transit rail connections to airports where part of the facilities were off the airport but on right-of-way owned or controlled by the airport sponsor. These decisions relied more on the access road principles of Paragraph 620.a., than on the language of Paragraph 622.

Also, the agency has made clear that when an on-airport project would have both airport and general use, PFC funding (again, relying on AIP eligibility) could not be used for any portion of the project, because the project was not for exclusive airport use. (March 1995 ARP-1 letter to SFO on preliminary SFO BART station design.)

Longstanding agency guidance on eligibility does not permit AIP (or PFC) funding of ground access projects that:

Are not located on airport property or on right-of-way owned or controlled by the airport; or

Are intended for the use of both airport and non-airport passengers, regardless of the benefit to the airport.

Questions, please contact APP-500.

### **3). Use of Airport Revenue for Ground Access Projects**

Guidance for the use of airport revenues on airport ground access transportation projects is provided in “Policies and Procedures Concerning the Use of Airport Revenue,” Section V.A. 9 (64 FR, 7718-7719, February 16, 1999).

For airports that have received Federal assistance, revenues generated by the airport may be used only for the capital or operating costs of: (A) the airport; (B) the local airport system; or (C) other local facilities owned or operated by the airport owner or operator, and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property. (49 USC §47107(b), § 47133)

Ground access facilities that are an integral part of an airport capital project could be covered by (A) as a capital cost of the airport. All other ground access facilities, especially if located off airport property, would need to meet (C)—capital and operating cost of facilities owned or operated by the airport owner and substantially and directly related to the air transportation of passengers or property. This is a somewhat different standard than the one applied to PFC eligibility, which requires that the facilities be exclusively for airport use. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that local governments do not impose a “hidden tax” on air travel, by diverting airport-generated revenues to non-airport related municipal uses.

*Policy guidance.* The FAA’s final policy on use of airport revenue, issued in February 1999, affirms that airport revenue may be used for capital and operating costs of transit system and ground access facilities owned or operated by the airport and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property. The policy effectively tracks the language of the legislative guidance and does not provide additional detail or explanation.

In October 1996, the FAA issued a letter to the City of San Francisco advising that airport revenue could be used for specific structures and equipment of the planned BART station at San Francisco International Airport (SFO). Approved use of airport revenue was limited to actual costs of on-airport facilities that were to be used exclusively by

airport passengers. However, limitation of the approval to on-airport facilities constructed solely for airport purposes was based on the limits of the request received, rather than on an agency interpretation of the limits of eligibility.

Airport revenue has been used in limited circumstances for portions of other airport transit rail stations, but only for on-airport facilities that clearly fall within the statutory guidance.

In 1999, the FAA approved the use of airport revenue for a portion of the Portland International Airport light rail project. (Revenue in this case was in the form of value received by the airport from a contribution of construction of a part of the light rail system by Bechtel.)

In 2000, the FAA approved an apportioned contribution of airport revenue for the Hiawatha Corridor Light Rail System in Minneapolis. The system served the airport through two on-airport stations, but also served non-airport passengers between the downtown area and the Mall of America. The airport contribution was allowed in proportion to projected airport use in relation to total use of the parts of the system on airport property.

Accordingly, actual decisions to date support the following principles of interpreting the basic statutory guidance:

The portion of a ground access project that is on the airport, is designed and constructed exclusively for airport use, and is integrated into the airport terminal complex may be considered a “capital project of the airport,” as in the incorporation of the BART station in the SFO international terminal building.

All other ground access facilities would be evaluated against the requirement that they be facilities “owned or operated by the airport owner or operator and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property.”

“Owned” means that the airport owner or operator holds legal title to the facilities for which airport revenue is used.

“Operated” means that the local or state government or authority that owns or operates the airport is legally responsible for the operation of the ground access facility (e.g., transit system), and operates the facility either with its own employees or through a management contract with a private firm or other public agency. Subsidy of the local transit system is not considered “operation” of the system by the airport.

“Directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers,” as applied to a ground access project, means that the project:

Is intended primarily for the use of airport passengers (air passengers,

airport employees, airport visitors), i.e., it is designed and constructed for ground transportation to the airport; *and* is projected to be used primarily by airport passengers.

The use of airport funds for a project that would be used to some degree by non-airport passengers is permitted, but is limited in two ways:

Airport funds cannot be used for portions of the project that are not necessary for the purpose of serving airport passengers.

Airport funds must be prorated to airport use. I.e., for portions of the project used by both airport and non-airport passengers, airport funds to be used for the project cannot exceed a portion of total project funding greater than the projected percentage of total use of the project by airport passengers.

If an on-airport ground access project is designed and constructed for the exclusive use of airport passengers and does not have a general transportation function, the incidental use of the facility by non-airport passengers does not require proration of the airport contribution.

Questions, contact AAS-400 (Airport Compliance Division)

## **SECTION B: COORDINATION OF AIRPORT ACCESS NEEDS WITH SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES**

The guidance below is based on discussions between APP-400 and surface transportation agencies. These agencies included the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), a State DOT, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and a Regional Planning Commission. Additional coordination was not felt to be necessary since the guidance is broad in nature and based on standard planning practices. Considerable additional coordination would be required to capture all of the nuances of the 50 state DOTs, the hundreds of MPOs, the hundreds of transit operators and the thousands of regional planning bodies.

## **1). Airport Sponsor Participation in MPO Meetings**

Airport users place considerable demand on local roads, intersections, highways and transit systems. When these surface access facilities become stressed, it can result in impacts to the traveling public as well as airport-related businesses and employees. In urbanized areas, regular participation by airport officials in technical committee meetings of the MPO related to transportation planning is important. Participation in MPO activities allows off-airport surface access and land use needs of the airport to be presented to those officials that can address the needs within the context of the regional transportation system. Participation also allows airport officials to educate the community on the benefits of the airport and helps build support for worthwhile airfield and landside development. Intermediate and long-range (10-20 years) airport plans should be included in the MPO long-range transportation plans (which by regulation, must cover a minimum of 20 years) so that land use, surface access and air quality budget requirements can be accommodated. MPO addresses can be found at: <http://www.planning.dot.gov/overview.asp>

Airports in less populated regions may not have an MPO for the area. In these cases, the State Department of Transportation (DOT) or a local planning entity are responsible for transportation planning and project development. The airport should contact the State DOT for information on technical committee meetings. State DOT addresses can be found at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/webstate.htm>

Airport sponsors should also meet regularly with the local State DOT field offices and the State DOT aviation offices to discuss surface transportation activities they may have planned and their potential effect on the airport. At times a planned transportation project could be modified to accommodate an airport need without cost to the airport sponsor.

## **2). Prioritization of Surface Transportation Projects by Surface Transportation Agencies**

Frequently an airport has off-airport surface transportation needs that cannot be funded by AIP, PFC or airport revenue. Project needs vary from the ordinary such as signage, intersection improvements, and roadway maintenance, to substantial new bus or rail systems and additional highway lanes. Many of these projects can be funded through FHWA and/or FTA surface transportation monies allocated or apportioned to State DOTs and public transportation operators. There is strong competition for this money and projects must achieve local consensus to be considered for funding. Transportation investment decisions under these programs principally are the responsibility of State and

local officials, not FHWA or FTA.

FHWA and FTA have established a number of transportation planning and programming processes for documentation, coordination and prioritization of surface transportation projects. These processes are used for state and local decisions on the use of FHWA and FTA funds. The processes that airport officials should be familiar with are:

- Metropolitan Long-Range Transportation Plan: Shows significant transportation development in a metropolitan area for a 20+-year period. Major rail, bus, and highway access projects to airports should be included in the long-range transportation plan.
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Listing of priority transit, roadway, bikeway and other surface transportation projects prepared by an MPO for its area of jurisdiction. The TIP is for a four-year period and is updated at least every four years. The TIP is similar in function to an individual airport Capital Improvement Plan.
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): A STIP is prepared for each state. It is a compilation of the individual MPO TIPs and State DOT projects for areas outside the jurisdiction of an MPO. The STIP and TIP are authorizations to seek funding but not an obligation to fund. The STIP is similar in function to the FAA regional office Airport Capital Improvement Plan.

For additional information on the Long-Range Transportation Plan, TIP and STIP, please refer to:

- “Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making” at:  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/citizen>
- “Title 23, Part 450-Planning Assistance Standards”-Highways at:  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/legislat.html>  
Click on Highway Related Regulations
- “TIP-A Guide for Municipal Officials, Special Interest Groups, and Citizens.”  
<http://www.dvrpc.org>  
Click on “TIP Quicklinks,” then “TIP,” and finally “TIP Guide.”

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the MPO for the Philadelphia Region, prepared the document “TIP-A Guide for Municipal Officials, ...” State DOTs and MPOs in other parts of the U.S. may have similar documents.

### **3). Coordination of Airport Access Needs With Surface Transportation Agencies**

Airport officials should use existing methods and channels to coordinate surface transportation needs with federal, state and local transportation agencies, if such

coordination is successful, appropriate and legal. Otherwise, airport officials should consult with the State DOT field office, the local transit operator, MPO or local planning body to determine:

- Jurisdictional agency for requested project(s)
- Data and analysis needed to justify project(s)
- How the long-range transportation plan, TIP and STIP processes work, including how projects are prioritized
- Funding options

State aviation agencies should be consulted to determine willingness to support project entry into the TIP/STIP or long-range transportation plan.

Some off-airport surface access projects, such as signage improvements, may not need to be specifically included in the TIP/STIP. Contact the appropriate field office of the State DOT to determine jurisdiction for such projects.

#### **4). Summary**

Airport officials should:

- Regularly participate in MPO technical meetings related to transportation and land use
- Regularly meet with local State DOT field offices and State DOT aviation offices to discuss planned surface transportation activities
- Educate the community on the importance of the airport (establish stakeholder coordination process)
- Obtain local support for airport access (and airfield) projects
- Ensure that airport master plan and state/regional aviation system plans identify surface access needs
- Understand and participate in the development of the region's long range transportation plan, TIP and the STIP
- Know what justification and data needed to support an off-airport access project
- Work with the State DOT, MPO and transit operator to get worthwhile off-airport access projects on the TIP or long-range transportation plan
- Work with the State DOT and transit operator to get projects on STIP implemented

Questions, please contact APP-400 (Airports Planning and Environmental Division)

## SECTION C: SUMMARY OF USEFUL RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

The documents noted below are dated, yet they contain certain relevant material that may be useful to airport sponsors in planning for surface access improvements. TCRP Report 83 is being updated under the Airport Cooperative Research Program.

1). **“Intermodal Ground Access to Airports: A Planning Guide”**

DOT/FAA/PP96-3; FHWA and FAA, December 1996

Limited copies available from APP-400 (FAA Airport Planning and Environmental Division)

Copies also available from the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia

The report contains the following information that may be useful in surface access planning for airports:

- Performance measures-Chapter 3
- Data collection and surveys-Chapter 4
- Patterns and demands-Chapter 5
- Access road signage-pages 106-108
- Parking alternatives-pages 123-129
- Airport access services (i.e. taxi)-tables 6.4-2, 6.4-3 and 6.4-4

2). **“Improving Public Transportation Access to Large Airports”**

Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 62, FTA/TRB, 2000

Copies available from the Transportation Research Board; National Research Council; 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W.; Washington, D.C. 20418

The report contains the following information that may be useful in surface access planning for airports:

- Lessons learned from successful rail access systems-page 6 and Chapter 5
- New and emerging technologies-pages 6-7 and Chapter 6
- Defining the airport ground access market-pages 45, 46
- Airport ground access passenger survey techniques-pages 48-54

3). **“Strategies for Improving Public Transportation Access to Large Airports”**

Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 83, FTA/TRB, June 2006

The report can be viewed at: [http://trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp\\_rpt\\_83a.pdf](http://trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_83a.pdf)  
Copies available from TRB at the address noted under item C2), above

The report contains the following information that may be useful in surface access planning for airports:

- Improving public mode share for employees-Chapter 4
- Strategies for improving the management of airport ground access services-Chapter 5
- Getting intermodal information to the customer-Chapter 7

Questions, please contact APP-400 (Airports Planning and Environmental Division)

## **SECTION D: RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR AIRPORT SURFACE ACCESS PLANNING AND DESIGN**

### **1). “A Guide For Assessing Airport Curbside Operations And Terminal Area Roadways”-Airport Cooperative Research Project-TRB and FAA**

Approved project that is expected to be complete mid-year 2008.

Objective: Develop a guide to analyze the operation of the airport curbside and terminal area roadways.

### **2). “New Concepts For Airport Terminal Landside”-Airport Cooperative Research Project-TRB and FAA**

Approved project that is expected to be complete mid-year 2008.

Objective: Develop new concepts that will stimulate design innovation for terminal landside facilities at large and medium-hub airports. Intent is to improve passenger accessibility and level of service between ground transportation and the secure part of the terminal.

### **3). “Case Studies Of Successful Airport Intermodal Projects.”-FAA Technical Center-Phase 1**

Phase 1 of the project will start in 2006. Final product expected by the end of 2007. Additional case studies (i.e. Phase 2) may be funded based on the findings of Phase 1.

Questions, please contact APP-400 (Airports Planning and Environmental Division)