**FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: SUBCOMMITTEE ON AIRPORTS
SPRING 2016 MEETING
ATLANTIC CITY, NJ | MARCH 15-16, 2016**

The Subcommittee met on March 15-16 at the at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center's (the Tech Center) Airport Technologies Research Facility in Atlantic City. Tech Center leadership (Ms. Shelly Yak and Mr. Eric Neiderman), representatives from the Airport Technologies Research Branch and FAA Office of Airports also attended the meeting. During the meeting the Subcommittee reviewed the ongoing progress Branch staff have made on the varied airport safety, planning, design, environmental and pavement projects within the Branch's research portfolio and reviewed the Branch's proposed FY2018 budget.

The following section summarizes the Subcommittee's findings, and recommendations.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1: The Spring 2016 meeting was the first meeting at which Branch projects and associated budgets/spending were grouped by research project area (RPA). As noted in the Subcommittee's Fall 2015 report, the Branch had proposed presenting project budgets by RPA to more clearly indicate how Branch funding is and will be allocated and prioritized and provide a more logical grouping of individual research projects. The revised budget presentations based on RPAs did provide these benefits, but there was concern among committee members that budget reporting at the individual project level was lacking in the new reports. There was also continuing concern that current budget reports do not effectively convey individual project progress (e.g., project spending to date vs. anticipated budget to complete).

Recommendation 1: The Subcommittee recommends that Branch staff provide more detailed budget reports that include detail at the individual projects (e.g., RPD) level that can then be rolled up to RPA subtotals. The Subcommittee also recommends that Branch staff provide clearer summary-level assessments of spending to date and anticipated budget to complete projects at the RPD level.

Finding 2: The Branch's proposed FY2017 and FY2018 budgets as presented to the Subcommittee included capital investments for new facilities—specifically an on-site photometric laboratory, an asphalt concrete pavement testing facility, and additional storage space. The budgets for these facilities were presented as "above the line" expenditures, defined by Branch staff to mean capital projects that would require expenditure above expected FY2017 and FY2018 funding levels. Subcommittee members raised concerns about the long term sustainability of such above the line expenditures and suggested that barring extraordinary circumstances/justification, such expenditures should be included within the existing program budgets.

Recommendation 2: The Subcommittee recommends that Branch staff include capital expenditures within expected program budgets, rather than as supplemental/additional

program expenditures. Such requests should be accompanied by a description of the project's justification (e.g., critical testing functions that cannot be obtained on a timely or cost effective basis elsewhere; essential facility rehabilitation). The Subcommittee also recommends that the Branch consider dedicating a portion of its budget to capital improvements, including major facility maintenance/renovation, the costs of which are expected to increase as several of the Branch's facilities age.

Finding 3: Other than the aforementioned requested enhancements to budget reporting and treatment of capital projects described in Findings 1 and 2, the Subcommittee was satisfied that the Branch's proposed FY2018 budget is reasonable and reflective of industry priorities for airport-related research.

Recommendation 3: The Subcommittee recommends accepting the Branch's proposed FY2018 budget, but suggests that the FAA investigate options for incorporating capital expenditures within future budgets.

Finding 4: The Subcommittee appreciates the Branch's increased focus on airport planning and environmental issues and is interested in helping the Branch assess research projects in these areas.

Recommendation 4: The Subcommittee recommends that the FAA Office of Airports and Branch staff engage Subcommittee members (or their designees) to discuss future airport planning and environmental research projects. We also recommend engaging members of the Subcommittee on the Environment in these discussions.

Finding 5: The Subcommittee was very interested in the preliminary results of the FAA's "Pathfinder 4" initiative, which focused on unmanned aircraft system detection and deterrence technologies in the vicinity of airports. Such technologies are of great interest to 85.68 airport operators and the flying community.

Recommendation 5: The Subcommittee recommends that the Branch continue its support of UAS research activities that support airport safety and efficiency such as the Pathfinder 4 initiative.

Finding 6: Branch staff have continued to refine their airport safety database, which fuses information from the FAA's wildlife strike database as well as accident and incident reports from FAA and NASA databases. This database has been a key tool in the development of the FAA's Runway Incursion Mitigation (RIM) program, which began in the Fall of 2015 and is expected to continue indefinitely. In the RIM program, the FAA is identifying specific airfield locations at specific airports that are high priorities for physical or operational mitigations to reduce the risk of runway incursions. Subcommittee members believe that airport operators should have some level of access to the airport safety database to better understand what data are being used to drive RIM activities at their airport and so that these operators can undertake mitigation activities more proactively. The Subcommittee understands that providing such access may require de-identification of some of the incident and accident reports incorporated into the database (e.g., ASIAS, ATSAP).

Recommendation 6: The Subcommittee reiterates its recommendation from Spring 2015 and requests the FAA evaluate how it can make data from the Airport Safety Database available to airport operators so that this information can be used proactively by airport operators to enhance margins of safety at their facilities.