

Mountain Wave



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NEW FAA FUNDING STRUCTURE ADDS USER FEES TO \$14.1B 2008 BUDGET PROPOSAL

Now that the Bush Administration has published its **proposed 2008 federal budget**, long-rumored “user fees” for ATC services likely to appear in the **2008 FAA Reauthorization Act** are no longer a whispered issue, but are identified as a significant source of funding for future FAA operations. And, it’s beginning to look like the “big guns” are being lined up for what many in the industry see as a major battle. With the current FAA funding authorization expiring at the end of federal fiscal year 2007 on September 30th, they’re picking sides in what will likely be a showdown between airlines and general aviation and business aviation interests.

About 75% of current FAA funding is comprised of revenues from federal fuel taxes, ticket taxes and cargo taxes. Airlines, who bear the brunt of the current taxation, have been lobbying loud and clear for the initiation of “user fees” - for things like air traffic control services and other federally-funded services available to all forms of civil aviation ... GA, corporate *and* commercial ... saying the current system does not represent an equitable split.

The airline industry launched an effort last year to reform the FAA’s funding structure, proposing a means for charges and fees directly related to the services used. Such a pay-as-you-go system is estimated would transfer about \$2B of those service costs onto general aviation. Proposed FAA reauthorization legislation looks at expanding the contributions of general aviation and business aviation, and relieves the airlines from what they see as an unfair burden of responsibility for the funding of air traffic control services.

In its draft 2008 budget, the White House says that “under the proposal, FAA’s financing sources shift from a mix of fuel taxes, other excise taxes, and general fund contributions to user fees, fuel taxes, and a general fund contribution. FAA would have the authority to collect the user fees that directly offset the cost of FAA’s operations; expenditure of the available fees would be affirmed in the appropriations process. Air traffic user fees would be collected from commercial aviation operators. General aviation users would continue to pay a fuel tax that would be deposited into the **Airport and Airway Trust Fund**; fuel tax rates will be calibrated based on the costs that these users impose on the system. The general fund component of FAA’s budget would cover activities that benefit the public good like safety and public use of the airspace. Finally, the **Airport Improvements Grants** program and the majority of **Research, Engineering, and Development** program would continue to be funded by fuel taxes paid by all aviation users into the **Airport and Airway Trust Fund.**” Under the current budget proposal, user fees will be levied on access to busy airports, as well as aircraft registration and certification and medical certification.

In addition to the continued funding of the **Airport Improvement Program (AIP)**, which last year contributed nearly \$80M to Colorado airports, the proposed budget allots \$175M for a 21st Century satellite navigation system to replace the older air traffic control equipment - and an additional \$900 million for further ATC upgrades. As in the past, AIP expects to see the bulk of its resources come from the present structure of the **Airport and Airways Trust Fund**.

Betting on the contents of the draft budget proposed in early February and the posturing of FAA Administrator Marion Blakey over the past months, the alphabet organizations had been tooling up for sometime for a fight over user fees, stating that the current system is a more realistic break-out of costs-vs-use. You can expect some strong and vocal lobbying to come out of both sides of the argument in the next few months.

Many on the inside, however, believe the new Democratic majority is not convinced that major changes and reforms in the funding structure are needed. Some “capital-hillers” says the efforts of the airlines component to get business and general aviation to bear a larger share of the costs of the air traffic control system may stall in the newly-elected Democratic-controlled Congress.

CDOT LEADS DRIVE TOWARD WIDER USE OF AWOS INFORMATION

T.K. Gwin, CDOT Airports Engineer

Many of you regularly use **Colorado's Mountain AWOS system**, which consists of twelve Non-Federal Automated Weather Observing System sites in strategic locations throughout critical high terrain. This was funded by the Legislature and the Colorado Aeronautical Board. The system provides current weather to pilots flying through the mountains.

The AWOS project was designed to allow our supplier the ability to extend the contract price to airports that wanted automated weather but were not eligible for FAA Facilities and Equipment (F&E) funds. Discretionary aviation grants were provided to share the costs of several airport installations. Shortly after, the FAA-Denver Airports District Office authorized the use of General Aviation entitlement funds, making it possible for even more airports to install non-federal AWOS. All of this has resulted in Colorado currently having 29 Non-federal AWOS with more coming in the future.

All AWOS equipment is manufactured to meet stringent FAA requirements to provide certified data in METARS format. There are two major differences between Federal and Non-federal AWOS. The first is funding and the second is connectivity. Non-federal AWOS are not installed or maintained by the FAA, and therefore, they are not a part of the federal data collection system. In order for non-federal AWOS data to be included in the national data base, it must be sent through an authorized service provider into the national data base. Currently there is only one vendor authorized by the FAA to provide this service. The cost is prohibitive to many airports in Colorado as well as other states. Nationally about half of our non-federal AWOS are connected to the FAA while the other half is not. There are over 900 non-federal AWOS units in the U.S. and less than 500 are connected.

Data from unconnected AWOS sites is only available by via local phone line or aircraft radio within 25 nautical miles. This vital information is not available to forecasters, briefers, climatologists, researchers, etc.

More than four years ago, the **Division of Aeronautics** began working with the **FAA Weather Policy Office** to develop a method which would allow our non-federal AWOS data to be included in the national data base through a state-owned portal.

We discovered that this problem concerns many states and there were a hand full working to find a solution. With this widespread need, the **National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO)** agreed to include this issue in their annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FAA Administrator. Although the MOU is will not be signed until March or April, the FAA is moving forward with this intention. They formed a charter group and began meeting via teleconference twice a month during the fall of last year. We were invited to join the group in November. Early in December we were invited to meet at FAA Technical Center in Atlantic City to better understand the issues and to form possible solutions.

The FAA agreed to have the State of Colorado provide prototype **Data Collection System (DCS)** in February 2007, followed by a period of testing and modification resulting in a final specification that all States can utilize to establish individual portals for data transfer. It is our expectation that this cooperative effort will provide an avenue through which all non-federal AWOS data can be included in the national data base.

It is our goal to provide more current and accurate aviation weather data than ever before - improving flying safety nationally.

HAIL AND FAREWELL

We said goodbye in February to Division Senior Aviation Planner, Chris Pomeroy, as he left to relocate in Idaho and start a new career as an aviation consultant. Chris began working with Colorado airports more than eight years ago. His relationship with the FAA-Denver Airports District Office was pivotal in developing a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program to address Colorado's long-term system needs.

Following Chris' enviable record is Scott Brownlee, who returns to the Division after several years as Director of Planning and Development at Centennial Airport and Director of Aviation for Montrose Regional Airport and Hopkins Field in Nucla.

Wishing Chris a great future as he begins another chapter, we welcome Scott's perspective and understanding of statewide aviation to the Division once more.

THE CHANGING FACE OF AVIATION

You can point to a number of possible factors - high aircraft operating costs, pricey aviation fuels, escalating insurance costs, looming proposed user-fees - to explain the drop in certificated pilots in the US. But the bottom line clearly shows that the number of **active pilots at the end of 2006 had dropped BELOW 600,000**. Many in the aviation community thought that the recently-enacted FAA Sport Pilot License - and the plethora of new Light Sport Aircraft it has generated, would revitalize the industry. But rather than expand the pilot base and encourage new student pilots, the Sport Pilot rating has proved only to extend the active flying life of many older pilots.

The downturn in student-pilot starts could well impact the aviation industry in years to come. With an anticipated shortage of commercial pilots to fill future industry cockpits, FAA Administrator, Marion Blakey, announced in late January that she favors allowing airline transport pilots over the age of 60 - but less than 65 - to serve as flight crew on FAA Part 121 scheduled airlines so long as there is a less-than-60-year-old pilot in the cockpit with him or her. She stated that this would bring the FAA regulations in line with most international carriers operating under the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rules. In speaking to the National Press Club, the Administrator said that the rule change to affect the age-65 limit is **“a change whose time has come.”**

To date, no viable rationale for the 60-year limit has been voiced by medical and aging experts. Yet, there is reluctance by the industry and some pilot organizations, who anticipate replacing senior pilots with younger, less-costly pilots. Opponents of the rule-change point to the lack of critical risk analysis by ICAO when enacting their 65-year limitation.

EMBRY-RIDDLE AIRBORNE ONCE AGAIN

After two disastrous Christmas Day tornados which hit the Daytona Beach, FL campus of **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University** destroying a large portion of the school's Cessna 172 fleet of trainer aircraft, the flight instruction portion of the curriculum is back flying again.

Thanks to the support of the aviation industry, pilot organizations and individual aircraft owners, the **ERAU** spring semester began on schedule on January 16th - with a contingency of aircraft gathered to replace the broken ones. Financial support, addressing other infrastructure impacted by the storm, is also coming from all across the nation.

In addition to losses to the University's fleet of aircraft, administrative and academic facilities sustained damage amounting to between \$50M and \$60M. 40 aircraft were destroyed and another 10 damaged. However, in the forced-replacement of the training fleet, the programmed transition to glass-cockpit Cessna aircraft planned for Fall 2009, will be accomplished when new aircraft start arriving during 2007.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University grew from a World War II contract flight training program in metropolitan Cincinnati to become a leader in aviation education, providing baccalaureate and graduate degrees in aeronautical engineering, professional pilot and aviation management fields. In addition to the location at Daytona Beach, the University maintains a western campus at Prescott, AZ, as well as a network of resident centers worldwide and comprehensive online programs.

In late January, Governor Ritter appointed Rifle, CO resident, Russell George, as the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, completing his Cabinet and setting the stage for a new administration.

Mr. George is a former Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives and served under former governor Bill Owens as Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources for the past three years.

Aeronautics Division looks forward to working with Director George and welcomes him to the CDOT Team.

AERONAUTICAL BOARD WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

The seven-member **Colorado Aeronautical Board** greeted newly-appointed Western Slope representative, Dave Ubell, to its fraternity at the Board's January 17th meeting in Denver.

Mr. Ubell, a Olathe farmer and rancher, recently left the Montrose County Board of Commissioners after serving two terms. He is an active member of the Club 20 Executive Board, representing the twenty western counties on issues relating to the economy and the environment.

Mr. Ubell joins Harold Patton and Harry Felderman as December appointees of former-Governor Bill Owens.

Mr. Patton has served on the **Colorado Aeronautical Board** since 1999 as representative of Eastern Plains government and is its current Chairman. Mr. Felderman, a Greeley resident, has served as Eastern Plains representative since 2003.



COLORADO PILOTS ASSOCIATION HONORS GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS

At its annual meeting on November 4, the 700-member **Colorado Pilots Association** (CPA) recognized **Harriet Alexander Field**, Salida, Colorado and **Stevens Field**, Pagosa Springs, Colorado, for their exceptional services and facilities for General Aviation. Awards were based on members' experiences while flying throughout the State.

The **Harriet Alexander Field** award was given in recognition of staff and management efforts in accommodating the needs of visitors.

As one member wrote, "Airport manager, Carl Hasselbrink, greets arriving pilots with a smile and helpful information related to flight planning as well as information about local restaurants and accommodations. On hot summer days, he provides bottled water to the cockpit as soon as the aircraft taxis to parking. There are numerous tie downs and three courtesy cars available for arriving pilots and passengers. In the event that all three of the city cars are being used, Carl offers the use of his personal vehicle. If anyone in Colorado deserves this award, Carl should be at the top of the list."

The award to **Stevens Field** was given in recognition of the community support and efforts over the last three years to revitalize the airport through a major construction program that addressed soil issues and built a facility capable of accommodating aircraft up to 75,000 lb. gross weight.



Bob Goubitz(left), AVJET CORP general manager at Stevens Field, Pagosa Springs, visits with Airport Manager, George Barter(right).

A CPA member wrote, "The new general manager of Fixed Base Operations, Bob Goubitz, has brought new energy and enthusiasm to the operation and has created a new atmosphere of professionalism and friendliness that is welcomed by local pilots and serves as an enticement for visitors to the area." In July, the airport has also welcomed George Barter as Stevens Field Manager.

Thanks to Walt Barbo of CPA for the contents of this item.

PLASTIC PILOT CERTS MANDATORY BY 2009

In the never-ending war against drug-smuggling and airborne terrorism, the FAA proposes to make mandatory the replacement of your old (and, yes, out-dated) FAA Pilot Certificate with the more forgery-resistant "credit card" version.

Following a comment period until March 6, a Rule to require that **all pilot certificates be replaced in two years** from the date of the Rule - mechanic certificates in 5 years - will become effective. Rules concerning aircraft sales will also be tightened.

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY TO BE UPDATED



Numbers have escalated significantly in both passengers enplanements and related spending through Colorado airports since the **2003 "Economic Impact of Airports in Colorado"** was published. Based on direct benefits (on-airport jobs and spending), visitor spending (at resorts, in restaurants and at related tourist businesses) and through the impact that spending has on local economies, the **economic impact of airports** puts into perspective how vital a role aviation plays in our State.

Now an update of the Study, with publication anticipated for early 2008, will interpret growth over the past five years and take a far closer look at the impact of **Denver International Airport** on the State's economy than did the earlier edition. A total of 47.3 million passengers enplaned at DIA during 2006, up more than 4 million from 2005.

The **2007 AUTOMATED WEATHER STATION** listing is now available with frequencies and phone numbers for services that provide statewide real-time weather coverage - in a handy pre-punched card designed to fit into your Pilot's handbook or chart binder. Pick up your copy of the AWOS information card at your local FBO or request a complimentary copy from the Aeronautics Division. And, did you know that you can access current AWOS information from the CDOT website: www.colorado-aeronautics.org/AWOS.

AIRPORTS - WORKING TOGETHER

Travis Vallin, Aeronautics Division Director

When I was a young boy, my friends and I had a saying, "All for One-One for All". Now of course we borrowed this phrase from *The Three Musketeers*, and in my observations of how well Colorado Airports work together, this phrase is very fitting. Let me give you some examples: When congress authorized the **General Aviation Entitlement Program** under **AIR 21** which granted \$150,000 to each general aviation airport in the National Plan of Integrated Airports System (NPIAS), there was the flexibility for airports to loan their entitlement funds to other airports to pool funding for larger projects.

For example, we worked with the airports of **Pagosa Springs, Akron, Craig** and **Boulder** to create one \$600,000 project for each airport from 2004-2007-instead of four projects each year of \$150,000. So in 2004 **Pagosa Springs** had a \$600,000 project to construct a parking ramp and new taxiway connector because **Akron, Craig** and **Boulder** all loaned their entitlement dollars to **Pagosa Springs**. In 2005 **Akron** had \$600,000 for a new partial parallel taxiway because **Pagosa Springs** repaid their \$150,000 to **Akron** from 2004 and **Craig** and **Boulder** loaned their 2005 entitlement funds and Year-three **Craig** received the funds and Year-four **Boulder** received the \$600,000. This was done not only for these four airports but 16 additional airports also participated in helping each other with the GA Entitlement Program from 2004-2007. You know what they say, success breeds success and if Congress decides to continue this program under the **2008 FAA Reauthorization**, we already have 26 airports signed up to loan/borrow/transfer their GA Entitlement funds to create larger, more efficient airport projects.

Everyone knows how exciting a good airport crack-filling project can be right? Well if this makes you wonder how this could possibly be exciting then you are probably not part of the **All for One-One for All Airport Crack fill Crew!** Recently the airports in Northern Colorado approached the Aeronautics Division with the idea of having a dedicated crack fill machine housed at a single airport which would also be available for use by other nearby airports. In October the Colorado Aeronautical Board approved a grant to the **Greeley-Weld County Airport** to purchase a crack fill machine which can be used by other airports by going through some basic training and check-out procedures. Pooling of these types of resources has caught on and we are currently working with **Grand Junction** and **Akron** to provide more opportunities for airports to help each other maintain runways, taxiways and aprons throughout the State.

The Colorado booth at the **National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA)** annual convention is another example where airports throughout Colorado have pooled their resources and worked together under a common goal. This will be the third year for the Statewide Booth which is supported by the **Governors Office of Economic Development** and the **Colorado Aeronautical Board** to promote economic development through Colorado Airports.

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RADICAL DESIGN "SILENT AIRCRAFT" UNVEILED

They used a lot of engineering concepts that might make you want to say "I wish I'd thought of that - it's so simple" in developing the latest brainchild of the aviation think tanks.

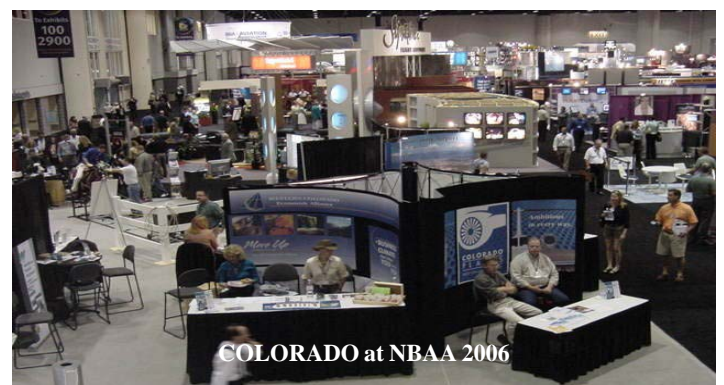
Designers say it's possible to have the **SAX 40** flying by 2030, reducing noise around airports and using 25% less fuel with its revolutionary design and use of materials.

The engines will be embedded aft *above* the wing to reduce noise below; a "blended wing" will provide a smoother, tail-less body to reduce drag and the noise effect of drag. The output of the three smaller engines will be encased in "muffled" exhaust and will provide variable-area exhaust nozzles; gear and brakes will be in fairings; flaps and slats will be eliminated - all in the hope of reducing surface turbulence - thus reducing noise.

Where this concept aircraft will go is anybody's guess. But this generation-after-next design is surely to get the attention of the aviation community and the public as it strikes out toward "new horizons".



Research is being conducted jointly by engineers from Cambridge University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is funded by many in the industry, including Rolls-Royce and Boeing.



With all the recent snow, how could I forget to mention the **DIA surplus equipment program** which has kept over 45 pieces of Airport equipment in service on airports throughout the State. To quote Front Range Airport Manager Dennis Heap "Without the surplus DIA Equipment, we would still be digging out from all the snow". I guess that pretty much says it all.

These are only a few recent examples how airports in Colorado have worked together but I can tell you that there is information, knowledge and experiences shared among airports on a daily basis for the betterment of the Colorado Aviation System.
One For All - All For One!

WILDLIFE - A REAL FACTOR IN AIRPORT SAFETY

Colorado is proud of its abundance and variety of wildlife and we take very seriously the responsibility to maintain our pristine wilderness. But when it comes to airport safety - and the safety of aircraft and passengers, the dilemma of loyalty makes it difficult to always excuse the hordes of wild geese or metropolis colonies of prairie dogs - or even the pair of nesting golden eagles that have delayed start of runway construction at the Durango-La Plata County Airport for some time. And our colder-than-normal winter along the Front Range has brought much wildlife into communities and onto airport operations areas in search of food like never before.

No question that wildlife strikes can be dangerous and reports of encounters have increased over the past 10-15 years. Most common of the four-legged infiltrators are deer, elk and coyotes - perhaps because these are most common in rural Colorado areas. Multiplying colonies of prairie dogs threaten wiring to vital lighting and navigation equipment. Seasonal flights of migratory water fowl are especially critical along the vast North American fly-ways in spring and fall.

Interference by humans into natural "home turf" leaves wildlife confused - and airport users concerned.

The FAA has taken a strong stance in the past years to support efforts by airports of all sizes to mitigate wildlife encroachment - through increased wildlife fencing and better understanding the habits and habitats of regional wild things. Airport managers have taken up the cause as well - carefully clearing grassy areas that make good habitat, keeping an eye out for breaks in fencing, hazing coyotes with firecrackers and rubber bullets and establishing hunting programs in geese-heavy areas near the airports. And, as pilots we can't forget those general aviation airplanes tied down on the ramp make attractive summer residence for nesting birds - under the cowling, in the horizontal stabilizer riggings, in the turbine intakes.

In all, Colorado ranks eighth in the nation for wildlife strikes - and the critters are not about to go away anytime soon. The hours close to dusk and dawn are times for greatest alertness to wildlife on the runway or safety areas. Of the 1917 wildlife strikes by planes in Colorado from 1988 through 2005, birds, such as geese, ducks and hawks, accounted for 1834.

So until we can learn to live without invading each other's space, vigilance in the cockpit and on the airport is the answer.



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USER FEES PROPOSED

PILOT NUMBERS DOWN

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