



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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Bill to Help Modernize Regional Business Airports Wins Approval in State House

OKLAHOMA CITY – A bill designed to bring Oklahoma’s regional business airports up to speed was approved by an overwhelming majority of state Representatives today.

House Bill 2082, also known as the Airport Modernization Bill, passed the House 96-4 and will now head to the Senate for approval. If approved by the Senate and signed by Gov. Brad Henry, the bill would create the Airport Modernization Program, which would provide \$40 million in one-time state appropriations to the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission to implement the program.

Through the program, Oklahoma’s 49 regional business airports will be eligible to apply for grants that they can use for specific airport-improvement projects, including the costs to construct or renovate terminals and hangars primarily used for general aviation. Funding may also cover the costs associated with providing adequate navigational aids that will allow aircraft to land safely, even in bad weather.

“We are absolutely thrilled that our legislators see the value in this bill,” Commission Director Victor Bird said. “Our regional business airports are the front doors to communities and are often times the first things that businesses see when they are looking to either build or relocate in Oklahoma. Businesses that use our airports are the same ones creating jobs and investing in those communities. So, it’s extremely important that our communities provide the services and convenience that today’s business travelers need. This bill is good for our airports. It’s good for our communities. And it’s good for our state.”

Bird expressed appreciation to Rep. Mike Jackson, R-Enid, for serving as principal author of the bill, along with representatives James Covey, D-Custer City; Lucky Lamons, D-Tulsa; Danny Morgan, D-Prague; T.W. Shannon, R-Lawton; and Mike Thompson, R-Oklahoma City; and senators David Myers, R-Ponca City; Harry Coates, R-Seminole; Debbe Leftwich, D-Oklahoma City; and Jeff Rabon, D-Hugo, for agreeing to serve as co-authors.

“This legislation is critical to the prosperity of the state. It is an investment in ourselves that will provide much more than a fair return in the decades to come,” Bird said.

Oklahoma’s aviation and aerospace industry is the state’s largest employer, providing more than 150,000 jobs across the state. According to the most recent studies, one in 10 Oklahomans derives his or her income from aviation.

The Commission’s mission is to encourage, foster and assist in the development of aeronautics in Oklahoma and to encourage the establishment and maintenance of airports. This includes the preservation and improvement of the state’s 114 public airports in communities throughout the state, which make up the State Airport System.