

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 17, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

In my fiscal year 1976 Budget Message, I stated that my Administration would transmit legislation to restructure existing Federal airport and airway development programs. Following extensive consultations with members of the Congress, State and local governments, aviation groups, and others, I am today sending a comprehensive legislative program to the Congress.

To help ensure continued improvement in the safety and efficiency of the Nation's excellent air transportation system, this program will extend for five years the 1970 Airport and Airway Development Act to provide funding authorizations for fiscal years 1976-80.

As an additional step to enable State and local officials to plan and to manage Federal airport assistance effectively, this bill would establish a multi-year, predictable formula to allocate the bulk of the aviation grants funds directly to States and local airport sponsors. This formula approach, coupled with other features of this bill which provide more flexibility in the use of Federal assistance, will enable State and local officials to address their highest priority airport needs while reducing burdensome Federal red tape. I am also proposing removal of federal restrictions which currently prevent State and local governments from imposing certain airport taxes.

One of my principle goals is the establishment of strong partnerships among Federal, State and local governments in the execution of national domestic programs. Consistent with this goal, this legislation provides for gradually increasing the responsibility of the States in general aviation program. With many States using new general aviation facilities to stimulate community development, this is an appropriate step at this time.

The legislation I am proposing today also includes a separate measure to adjust the revenues accruing to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. These adjustments are designed to generate financial contributions from the users of the aviation system which more equitably match the system benefits they receive. In this connection, I am requesting that user revenues also finance the direct costs of maintaining air navigation facilities.

I commend the Congress for initiating hearings on this important problem and for its prompt attention to the extension of the airport and airway development program. I have asked Secretary Coleman to work closely with the Congress to insure speedy enactment of the aviation program I have proposed to meet the challenges of a growing America.

GERALD R. FORD

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