

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2004

September 27, 2021

Administrator Stephen Dickson
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Dickson:

We are writing to request your support for an airport runway extension project in Wicomico County, Maryland—a project of critical importance to the regional economy of the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Over the last year and a half, Congress has passed legislation providing billions of dollars in federal resources to support our nation's airports and aviation infrastructure, reaffirming that this infrastructure is critical for our long-term economic success and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that we do not lose sight of this principle when we consider the local and regional economic benefits of individual airport projects.

Salisbury Airport in Wicomico County has been engaged in a long-term effort to extend one of its runways so that it can better attract and retain passenger airline service in the region. It has been working diligently over multiple years to work through the FAA's approval process including updating its plans, conducting environmental assessments, and incorporating feedback from the Washington Airport District Office each step of the way.

Unfortunately, the FAA has recently concluded that the project lacks a compelling justification and is therefore eligible for only limited federal support. This determination on the part of the FAA has forced Salisbury Airport to scale down its project by extending the runway to 7,600 feet, rather than to 7,800 or 8,000 feet. We are advised that the option to pursue a longer runway extension would better support the region's economic development goals.

The runway project is critical for the airport's ability to maintain its important relationship with Piedmont Airlines, and to build on this relationship in pursuit of further economic development opportunities and job creation. Piedmont's current and next generation of jets needs the full 8,000 feet of runway. While we acknowledge the work of FAA's economic and financial experts in reviewing a benefit-cost analysis for Salisbury Airport, it appears that the FAA's analysis and the conclusions drawn were too narrow in their perspective and failed to capture the important opportunities that depend on this runway extension. It failed to consider, for example, Salisbury Airport's relationship with Piedmont and Piedmont's partner, American Airlines, and the possibility of adding aircraft maintenance facilities and a maintenance training center that could bring hundreds of new jobs to the region.

We ask, therefore, that you reconsider the recent determination to limit Salisbury's eligibility for federal support and provide full consideration for robust federal funding for this important regional project in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator