

## Infrastructure is community issue



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Unfortunately, in aviation as with many other industries, consumers may not have the best understanding of government policies that have a big impact on them or their communities. Earlier this year ACI-NA conducted national research that showed consumers don't fully understand how airports are funded, but when educated, they largely support airport infrastructure investments.

A majority (61%) recognized the importance of airports to the economy, with 33% saying they are "extremely important" to their local economy, a finding that is consistent with a recent ACI-NA report that found that 10.5 million jobs and \$1.2 trillion in spending were attributable to economic activity generated by the nation's 490 commercial airports. But despite widespread public support, only one in four Americans were aware that the federal government has the power to limit how airport improvement funds are spent at the local level. Even fewer people (16%) know that general tax revenues are rarely used to fund commercial airports.

ACI-NA is working to change that and has recently launched a national public education campaign aimed at fostering awareness and understanding of the vital role that America's commercial airports play in economic growth and job creation.

This is critically important because local communities need to come together to support improving airport infrastructure. The FAA projects that domestic passenger and cargo volumes will at least double over the next decade. To give you a frame of reference, in 2012 we expect 730 million people will travel through America's airports. By 2024, we expect that number to swell to 1 billion people.

It's a mistake to get too wonky on this issue because the most important thing for consumers is that their airports run efficiently and help to generate positive economic impacts in their communities. This point has been underscored by the pervasive political discussions regarding local and national elections--people want policies that will help create jobs and restore economic growth. Well, vibrant airports are essential

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for communities as they seek to grow their employment base and attract new businesses. But we need to ensure that our airport infrastructure can continue to support the growth that it's helping to create.

Airport infrastructure is not an aviation issue but a community issue and an economic development issue. We need to start talking in those terms so that Main Street understands their stake in airports being able to build and maintain effective modern infrastructure.

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