



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

530 E. Main Street, 3rd Floor
Aspen, Colorado 81611
phone (970) 920-5200
fax (970) 920-5198

January 12, 2024

U.S. Secretary of Transportation
Secretary Pete Buttigieg
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Senator John Hickenlooper
400 Rood Ave, Suite 220
Grand Junction, CO 81501

Senator Michael E. Bennet
225 North 5th Street, Suite 511
Grand Junction, CO 81501

Federal Aviation Administration – Denver Airport’s District Office
John Bauer, Manager
26805 E. 68th Ave., Suite 224
Denver, CO 80249

To whom it may concern,

Aspen/Pitkin County Airport is in the process of developing a revised Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for submission to the FAA. We look forward to redeveloping our airport into a model of safety and access, and appreciate FAA’s support in that work today and into the future as we endeavor to meet the FAA’s standards and advance the priorities of our community.

This process is directed by a set of community guidelines called the Common Ground Recommendations. An overwhelmingly important directive within those recommendations is that Pitkin County remains a leader when it comes to addressing climate change. To that end, we plan to construct a nation-leading model terminal that employs cutting edge green energy design strategies such as electrification, energy storage, deep energy efficiency, and passive solar design. Beyond that, we have adopted ambitious emission reduction targets for buildings,

facilities, ground equipment, and aviation fuel combustion. Our goal is an overall reduction of 30% from the 2019/2020 baseline by 2030.

All of this is to say that we understand the FAA's primary focus is on safety and access. and we humbly submit that climate action should be an even higher priority than it currently is given the immense risk it presents to the FAA's safety obligations. As a world-famous destination and a key partner of your Administration, the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport is an ideal venue and we would like to help the FAA demonstrate vanguard climate action solutions, policies, and strategies.

First, we applaud and strongly support the direction of the [United States Aviation Climate Action Plan](#). At the same time, we believe achieving net zero aviation by 2050 will take more than what's currently in the plan. For example, the carbon offset market is increasingly proving to be [questionable](#). The price of offsets is plummeting—because they are of low value—and businesses (including [Delta Airlines](#)) are getting sued for false claims. Therefore, offsets are unlikely to be a major component toward net zero by 2050.

Similarly, sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) can only be a solution if it genuinely reduces emissions and is certified as such; does not displace cropland; does not cause deforestation for palm plantations; and can be produced at scale. Furthermore, for SAF to be widely adopted, policies are needed to incentivize utilization and make the cost of the alternative fuel competitive with traditional jet fuel. Balancing all those conditions will be difficult, though we'd be happy to lead with the agency the transition to such a fuel.

Because of the challenges and opportunities that tackling climate change presents, we recognize it is essential to partner with likeminded stakeholders in order to continue to evolve our thinking around emissions reductions.

In particular, and this is our most important ask of the FAA in this letter, we would like to explore the possibility of developing a national, voluntary pilot program to demonstrate and implement a carbon fee at the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport, using revenues to address community impact and to cut emissions on the ground. The fee would also create a market signal to reduce high-carbon traffic. We are currently prohibited from implementing such a fee, but firmly believe that doing so would help offset the costs of climate change and encourage the adoption of low- or zero-emissions technologies. Indeed, revenues could be used to deploy those very technologies.

Why is this imperative to us? It is unlikely that global societies will be able to stabilize emissions without some kind of price on carbon. If Pitkin County, in partnership with the FAA, were able to pilot a program here as a national model, it's entirely plausible it could spread to other

airports, other municipalities, and then, concept-proved, to the federal government, and later to other countries that haven't already adopted carbon taxation.

We'd like our airport to become a tool for climate education for the many influential guests and average citizens who come through here, in partnership with the FAA. Indeed, we'd like to expand educational work with airlines as well.

We'd like to urge the FAA and other government agencies to double down on research and development working towards highly efficient aircraft.

When the FAA through the Denver ADO visited Aspen in the Fall, we understood that the FAA had a climate change committee, perhaps under the FAA's Office of Environment and Energy. We'd like to participate and coordinate with that group or any other climate related commission at the FAA.

Last, because of its mission prioritization on safety, and because of the health and safety threat that climate change poses in the form of superstorms, floods, drought, fire and social unrest, we believe the FAA has an responsibility to engage with government policymakers on the need for even more aggressive and comprehensive solutions to climate change, like the Inflation Reduction Act, Aspen/Pitkin County Airport would be a willing participant in that engagement.

In short, we are thanking you for the attention you've paid to climate already, and are asking you to deepen and further solidify that work; and we offer ourselves up as an active partner and ally. Please let us know how best to work with the FAA to pursue what we believe are shared objectives.

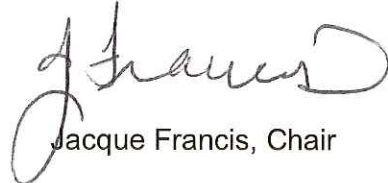
Sincerely,

PITKIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Greg Poschman, Chair

AIRPORT ADVISORY BOARD



Jacque Francis, Chair

CC: Pitkin County Airport Advisory Board
Jon Peacock, Pitkin County
Rich Englehart, Pitkin County
Dan Bartholomew, Pitkin County