

## **FAA Ignores Congressional Directive To Study Wayports**

FAA, in a study just turned over to Congress, has ignored a directive that it examine wayports as a long-term alternative to meet capacity needs of the nation. The study does conclude that underused airports show promise of being able to relieve congestion, at least in the short term. It says that if 100 daily IFR arrivals were shifted from future growth at Atlanta, Chicago O'Hare, Dallas/Fort Worth and San Francisco to four new connecting hub airports, there could be a systemwide 51% reduction in hourly delays. There also would be a reduction in daily delays of 24% at Atlanta, of 47% at San Francisco, 25% at DFW and of 102 hours a day at O'Hare, according to the study.

The report, A Case Study of Potential New Connecting Hub Airports, was mandated by Congress, which directed FAA to "undertake case studies of airports that are underutilized and could possibly relieve congestion at major hubs." Congress also directed FAA to "study the feasibility of wayports as a long-term alternative for improving our nation's air capacity." The study submitted to Congress by FAA does not address the second directive, and it never mentions the word "wayport."

The report says it is likely other airports have as much potential for new connecting hubs as the airports studied — Huntsville, Ala., to offload Atlanta; Port Columbus, Ohio, to offload O'Hare; Sacramento to offload San Francisco, and Oklahoma City to offload DFW. It is unlikely, however, that the airlines would want to serve three or four mini-hubs surrounding a major hub to relieve traffic because of the logistics involved. Congress said it wanted to study the feasibility of establishing "regionally located wayports throughout the nation to serve as transfer points for cargo and passengers." The report, by FAA's capacity office, also appears to ignore funding efforts by the agency's Office of Planning and Programming, which only recently awarded more than \$500,000 to study a site in Alabama east of Birmingham that was backed by state officials. Oklahoma officials have been looking at Clinton-Sherman Air Force Base.

Nonetheless, the study does show the impact, even short-term, of providing an outlet for traffic at major hub cities in the U.S. "It is reasonable to assume that as flight delays grow at traditional connecting hub airports, airlines will develop new connecting hub airports," the study says, citing Raleigh/Durham and Nashville as recent examples. The study itself made an attempt to determine the adequacy of the passenger terminal or air traffic control facilities, personnel and equipment to support a new connecting hub at the four airports. "At some point relatively early in the airline's decision process, the FAA and the local airport authority need to be notified of the possibility that the airline may open a new connecting hub so that necessary preparations can be made to accommodate the rapid increase in passengers and aircraft operations."

Huntsville, located 130 nautical miles northwest of Atlanta, makes an "attractive transfer point for the southern United States," the report says. "If, as a result of Huntsville's potential new hub status, 100 daily arrivals (200 operations) were shifted from future growth at Atlanta to Huntsville, the forecast daily delay at Hartsfield would be reduced 66 hours, a 24% reduction." Columbus, it said, is beginning a five-year \$80 million expansion program. At Sacramento, land is available to the east for an additional runway and other facilities. Oklahoma City master plan provides for an additional concourse with an increase of 12 gates, as well as a second terminal, the study says. Extensions are planned for all runways.

## **FAA Awards Contract To Bendix For Up To 26 Microwave Landing Systems**

FAA has awarded Bendix a potential \$16.9 million contract for up to 26 microwave landing systems. Dick Arnold, MLS program manager at FAA, said they will be installed "at airports where MLS shows a distinct advantage." The Cat 1 units will be installed between May 1992 and the end of 1994, with the first going to Seattle to "assist in and comply with a noise abatement program" and to improve traffic efficiency, Arnold said. Arnold said he is still working on a final list of airports but that another which will get the system is Pullman, Wash. Horizon Air serves both Seattle and Pullman. An instrument landing system cannot be installed at the latter airport, he said.

The MLS units are all off the shelf and intended as partial replacements for those FAA was to get under a previous contract with Hazeltine. They are not upgradable to Cat 2. FAA has a separate procurement for Cat 2 and 3 MLS on which a development contract is now out, and Arnold said the contract is