



OKLAHOMA AERONAUTICS COMMISSION

July 9, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590
United States

RE: FY 21 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)
Grant

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) is considered the lead government agency for providing support, funding, advocacy, and promotion of Oklahoma's airports and is a critical partner in providing advocacy and promotion of the aviation and aerospace industry. OAC's mission is to promote aviation and aerospace, which includes ensuring that the needs of commerce and communities across the state are met by the 108 public airports that comprise the Oklahoma Airport System, and ensuring the viability of the state's aerospace industry.

The Ardmore Municipal Airport and surrounding industrial airpark are a vital component to the air transportation system in Oklahoma. It is a premier airport in the Oklahoma system and is recognized as such given its classification as a Regional Business Airport. The 9,000' primary runway is the 4th longest civilian runway in the state, creating a grand opportunity for economic development and attraction of aviation and aerospace businesses. The Commission is well-aware of the vision for further developing the Ardmore Municipal Airport into a multi-modal facility to support air cargo and believes the public-private partnership will further grow the airport into a robust economic center for southern Oklahoma. Prior investments and commitments from state and local leaders in the necessary multi-modal infrastructure demonstrate the state and community's commitment to that goal.

OAC's 2017 Statewide Economic Impact Study of the Aviation and Aerospace Industry showed that this was the state's second largest industry with \$44 billion in annual economic activity. Airports, both commercial and general aviation, are a key component of this industry, supporting \$10.6 billion in annual economic activity. Ardmore Municipal Airport is an integral part of airport system, and the study showed significant measured economic benefits to the community and region.

- The airport is an essential part of the area's transportation infrastructure which has helped to attract and keep local employers. Businesses such as Carboxy

(carbon technologies), EJ (foundry), Dollar General (retail), Beetle Plastics (plastic fabrication), and OnLine Packing, Inc. (manufacturer) are reported to rely on the airport to support their operations and improve their efficiency.

- Michelin Tire also uses the airport to connect 16 other domestic and three international plants with its operations in Oklahoma.
- Dollar General choose Ardmore for the location of a major distribution center in part because of the airport. The company uses the airport to support its travel needs as well as those of its customers and suppliers who fly to Oklahoma. The distribution center is a mainstay of the local economy, supporting an estimated 600 jobs.
- The airport supports aircraft that are used to suppress grassland wildfires. Grassland fires pose a significant threat to ranching activities in the Oklahoma area. When thousands of acres burned in a fire during spring of 2016, the airport was used by nine firefighting tankers to mitigate damage and loss. Aerial firefighting is essential to protecting Oklahoma's land resources. The Forestry Service uses the airport on a regular basis to support aerial inspections aimed at detecting the danger of forest fires.
- The airport has over \$27 million in annual economic activity and supports nearly 280 direct and indirect jobs. These figures are just from airside activity on the airport and do not include the additional tens of millions in economic impact and hundreds of jobs supported in the greater industrial airpark.

In closing, the aforementioned representations clearly demonstrate and justify confidence for investing in additional public infrastructure at the Ardmore Municipal Airport. The Commission would encourage the US Department of Transportation to give full consideration to the Ardmore Development Authority's RAISE grant application for multi-modal infrastructure investment at the airpark. Existing businesses in the community, the citizens of southern Oklahoma, and commerce all across Oklahoma would greatly benefit from this investment in a multi-modal facility. Should you need additional information from our agency, I can be reached at 405-604-6903 or by email at gardies@oac.ok.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



Grayson Ardies
State Director of Aeronautics
Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission