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GA left out of DOT five-year plan

Posted by [Janice Wood](#) · July 5, 2010

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There is a hole in the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) draft five-year plan, says the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA). The plan, which covers the period from 2010 to 2015, almost completely ignores general aviation and its economic importance to the nation.

"In its current form the plan places more emphasis on travel by bicycle than on general aviation," wrote AOPA President and CEO Craig Fuller in comments on the draft plan sent to Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. Furthermore, the plan seems to reintroduce user fees as the preferred way to fund the FAA.

The draft contains six broad goals that cut across all modes of transportation: Safety; State of Good Repair (Airports); Economic Competitiveness; Livable Communities; Environmental Sustainability; and U.S. DOT Organizational Excellence.

"The draft plan seems to almost completely ignore the economic importance of GA as well as the relevance of GA to five of the six strategic goals," Fuller wrote. "The role of GA with regard to the Safety Goal is the exception, albeit even here the focus on GA is sparse."

In AOPA's comments, Fuller notes that on page 19 of the draft plan, the Department of Transportation revives user fees as "the policy model of choice," essentially lifting language from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 budget support documents sent to Congress by the Obama administration. Aviation is the only mode of transportation for which a funding "solution" is proposed. That proposal, says AOPA, ignores both the reauthorization bill currently pending in Congress and the Obama administration's FY2011 budget proposal, neither of which include user fees.

"AOPA strongly opposes a policy direction that suggests user fees," wrote Fuller. "As we have stated in the past, user fees are divisive, inefficient, and inequitable – and are likely to have a crippling effect on the GA community, which is already struggling."

Environmental sustainability is one of the six strategic goals listed in the draft plan. But once again, there is no mention of general aviation, which is faced with the eventual demise of 100LL due to pressure from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

“DOT leadership in this undertaking is imperative and we believe that the DOT draft plan should include a strategy for FAA as the lead agency to manage the effort,” Fuller wrote. AOPA, as part of a coalition of aviation associations dealing with the avgas issue, believes the FAA should develop an integrated program to reduce lead emissions from piston-engine aircraft that balances environmental improvements with aviation safety, technical feasibility, and economic impact. The general aviation industry can and should be a part of the program.

The DOT draft plan contains one intriguing new strategic goal: livable communities. But even here, the plan ignores general aviation’s potential contributions to meeting that goal.

“This section of the DOT strategic plan contains a signature initiative of President Obama, most notably to foster livable communities through place-based policies and initiatives that increase transportation choices and access to transportation services,” noted Fuller. “No prior USDOT strategic plan contains a comparable initiative.”

GA has a direct impact on that goal because of the role it plays connecting communities – the large, the small, and the very remote – ensuring access to essential services and providing emergency medical transportation and disaster relief. Additionally, GA serves as an engine that powers the growth of small communities and rural regions.

“AOPA’s goal in providing this input,” concluded Fuller, “is to ensure that the final plan recognizes the role and contributions of general aviation to the nation’s transportation system.”

For more information: AOPA.org, DOT.gov

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