



02/06/18

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and distinguished members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Dwight Bowden. I am the President of the Ashtabula County Airport Authority (ACAA) which owns and operates the Northeast Ohio Regional Airport (NEORA).

I come before you today to speak as a proponent of H.B. 378.

The ACAA was created by a single page resolution in 1965. Two years later, the airport was constructed as a jet capable facility. In 2013, ODOT Office of Aviation conducted an Ohio Airports Focus Study. This report assigned the total economic impacts attached to the airport at 45 jobs, \$1.8MM in payroll and \$5.5MM in output.

In 2017, the ACAA executed two major projects with a total value of over \$10MM. The first project was the reconstruction of Runway 9-27. The second project was constructing a new terminal building.

Since 2014, FAA grants have totaled over \$8.8MM and ODOT Aviation grants have totaled over \$812,000. These investments have resulted in the NEORA being awarded a fully conforming Commercial Operating Certificate by ODOT in December 2017. This certificate signifies that the airport meets all FAA and ODOT standards and is one of two fully conforming certificates issued within the State of Ohio.

It is the intent of the ACAA to leverage these investments into additional economic development both on and off the airport. One potential opportunity is establishing an airframe maintenance school on the airport. This project will not be possible without a high speed broadband connection.

In fact, just to conduct routine airport business is currently difficult with the existing "best effort" DSL connection. As a public entity, the ACAA is obligated to have Records Retention. To comply with the requirements of the law, the ACAA maintains a server and has assigned airport email addresses to the ACAA Board and airport staff to conduct airport business. Many times I cannot connect with the airport server and must use my business email with a copy to my airport email address for the public record.

With regards to airport safety, the NEORA participates in the FAA NOTAM Manager System. This system allows the airport to electronically post notifications to the FAA which are in turn broadcasted to aircraft in the air within seconds. Again, with our current connection, posting of NOTAMs can be difficult.

In summary, without a broadband connection, the ACAA is impaired to run the airport and the community we serve. For this reason, I encourage you to move H.B. 378 forward as it provides a means to correct a serious problem both for the airport and Ashtabula County.

Respectfully submitted,
Ashtabula County Airport Authority
Northeast Ohio Regional Airport
Dwight H. Bowden
President