



## **Aviation Technical Subcommittee Highlights of the May 22, 2025, Meeting**

Hybrid attendance

### **Meeting Participants:**

#### **In-Person Participants**

- Shawn Ames, Maryland Aviation Administration, (MAA)
- Ryan Washington, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, (MWAA)
- Mohammad Khan, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, (MWAA)

#### **Online Participants**

- Glen Warren, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, (MWAA)

#### **Online Participants Cont'd**

- Keith Meurlin, Washington Airports Task Force, (WATF) online
- Victor Henry, Baltimore Metropolitan Council, (BMC)
- Jeff Breeden, Federal Aviation Administration, (FAA)
- Suresh V. Neelapala, Federal Aviation Administration, (FAA)

### **TPB Staff:**

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| • Timothy Canan | • Olga Perez    |
| • Kenneth Joh   | • Zhuo Yang     |
| • Suraj Vujjini | • Renee Ritchey |

## **1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND APPROVAL OF HIGHLIGHTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (MAY 22, 2025)**

Mr. Shawn Ames called the meeting to order at 10:37 A.M. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with 8 participants attending in person and 6 joining via Microsoft Teams teleconference. Mr. Jeff Breeden from FAA announced that this would be his last meeting with COG, as he is taking a deferred retirement from the FAA and will be departing in June. He introduced Mr. Suresh V. Neelapala as his successor, who will be taking over responsibilities as the program manager for COG. The highlights from the previous meeting, held March 27, 2025, were approved as written by the Subcommittee.

## **2. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Canan reported to the Subcommittee that there have been no changes in staffing at COG. He also reported on efforts to secure funding for the next Air Passenger Survey from airport partners. COG is currently closing out two existing AIP grants (CASP 36 and 37) with the FAA and has submitted an application for the upcoming year's AIP grant. Appreciation was extended to Jeff Breeden for his partnership and support, and a welcome was given to Suresh V. Neelapala in his new role.

## **3. 2025 WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE REGIONAL AIR PASSENGER SURVEY**

Dr. Kenneth Joh provided an update on the 2025 Regional Air Passenger Survey, outlining its current status and timeline. He reported that preliminary planning has begun with the consultant, with more detailed planning to follow once airport partners commit funding. Over the

summer, the survey instrument will be developed, and staff badging procedures will begin. The survey will use a similar electronic data collection method as in 2023, with data collection targeted for October.

Dr. Joh also reviewed the 2023 survey instrument, highlighting critical questions that were re-asked in the survey instrument to ensure data completeness for gift card raffle eligibility. He described the survey's key sections, including airline and flight information, ground trip details (crucial for geographic analysis), airport choice factors, demographics, and questions on post-pandemic travel changes. He also noted new questions added in 2023 based on airport input, covering aspects of the airport experience like TSA usage and concession spending. Dr. Joh encouraged attendees to provide input on potential additions or removals of questions from the survey instrument. He cautioned that adding more questions could decrease the response rate and increase respondent burden, suggesting that if new questions are added, some existing ones might need to be removed. He then opened the floor for discussion and questions, allowing members more time to consider their feedback.

Mr. Ames indicated that no immediate changes were needed to the survey instrument, aside from the COVID-related questions. Mr. Mohammad (Azeem) Khan emphasized the importance of questions on boarding pass acquisition, citing its relevance for future airport check-in strategies. Mr. Canan explained how the survey has evolved to reflect technological shifts and traveler experiences, stressing the need to maintain core questions for longitudinal analysis while welcoming suggestions for wording improvements. Mr. Ryan Washington inquired about expanding the "airport experience" section to include topics like restrooms and accessibility, although Dr. Joh suggested avoiding overlap with internal airport surveys. The discussion concluded with no immediate changes recommended for the survey instrument, with members encouraged to provide any additional feedback to Dr. Joh.

#### **4. REGIONAL AIR PASSENGER SURVEY GEOGRAPHIC FINDINGS**

Mr. Suraj Vujjini presented the Air Passenger Survey Geographic Findings Report, highlighting how Subcommittee feedback was incorporated into the final version. He acknowledged the valuable input received, which helped refine data accuracy, clarity, and overall quality. Mr. Vujjini explained that the report's data consists of estimates based on expanded survey responses from October 2023, clarifying why these figures might not perfectly match internal airport data. He outlined corrections made to passenger and employment figures, clarifications of terms, and improvements to visuals, including map colors and table formatting. The updated report was distributed on July 20th and will be published on the COG website. The COG team's next step is to prepare the Ground Access Forecast Update memorandum.

A brief discussion followed Mr. Vujjini's presentation, initiated by Mr. Ames inquiring about the availability of complete, filterable spreadsheets of the survey data for airport-specific analysis, beyond what was presented in the report. Mr. Canan noted he did not recall sharing such detailed spreadsheets in recent years but affirmed that COG would investigate past practices and project files to see if this level of data could be provided. Dr. Joh clarified if Mr. Ames was referring to the final weighted dataset, to which Mr. Ames confirmed he was seeking the raw, detailed Excel data. The COG team agreed to investigate the possibility of sharing this data.

#### **5. ENHANCING ONLINE CONTENT FOR CASP PRODUCTS**

Ms. Olga Perez presented an initiative to make the Air Cargo Report more accessible to a broader, non-technical audience via a user-friendly website. She clarified that the website would condense existing report information into an easily digestible format, explaining fundamental cargo concepts, transportation modes, and introducing the region's three main airports. The content would detail regional air cargo market characteristics, demand analysis, commodities, and industry growth trends at national, regional, and at-home delivery levels. Additionally, the website would cover regional profile data, demand forecasts, commodity distribution, and cargo growth forecasts for BWI and Dulles, aiming to provide the public with easily understandable information on air cargo's regional impact.

A discussion followed Ms. Perez's presentation on making the Air Cargo Report more accessible. Mr. Canan explained that the website was a prototype for a new direction in COG's products, aiming for more interactive and modern web content rather than traditional reports. He encouraged feedback on this approach. Mr. Khan expressed interest in origin-destination data for air cargo, seeking to identify "hot spots" and the reach of regional facilities. Mr. Canan responded that while this was not included in the current report, it could be considered for future air cargo study updates and that they would investigate if existing freight plan data could provide these insights.

## **6. POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR NEW PROJECTS**

Mr. Canan noted a slight increase in FAA AIP grant funding due to recent reauthorization. This presents an opportunity to enhance the program by either expanding the scope of current studies or undertaking new initiatives, moving beyond the previous consistent funding and scope. He emphasized the importance of the Subcommittee's input on these potential changes.

Ms. Perez presented three potential new project ideas to leverage increased AIP grant funding, stressing that these were initial concepts for discussion, not final decisions. She encouraged input on these ideas, suggestions for new projects, or expansion of current initiatives:

- Economic Impact on Regional Airports: This study would provide a unified regional assessment of the three major commercial airports' combined economic impact. Building on existing airport-specific reports, the project aims to standardize common metrics, extrapolate data to a regional level, identify gaps, and deliver a clear narrative on the airports' economic value, growth opportunities, and benefits to various jurisdictions. It would require staff time for data collection and analysis, access to existing reports, and potentially a peer review.
- Regional Directory of Airports: Recognizing that the COG program primarily focuses on major commercial airports, this proposal aims to create a centralized directory of all aviation facilities (including general aviation and heliports) within the air system planning region. This tool would consolidate publicly available information (like FAA records) to provide a clear view of the region's overall aviation infrastructure, highlighting the often-overlooked support roles of smaller facilities in areas like medical transport, law enforcement, and emergency response. The project would involve staff time, GIS tools for mapping, and outreach to local airports for missing data, culminating in a complete and accurate resource for stakeholders.

- Initial Study of Urban Air Mobility (UAM): This proposed study is a foundational step to understand UAM in the region, focusing on building a baseline understanding rather than immediate implementation. It would explore what UAM entails (e.g., eVTOLs operating at low altitudes from vertiports), its potential benefits (improved connectivity, reduced congestion, emergency support), and its relevance to a populated, congested area like theirs. The study would cover UAM technologies, concepts, regulatory perspectives, potential regional use cases (e.g., emergency services, short passenger trips, cargo), and key factors like infrastructure, airspace integration, and community impacts. It would involve reviewing national/international guidance, scanning existing data, identifying stakeholders, summarizing regional opportunities/challenges, and recommending next steps for further research or monitoring. The output would be a summary report outlining potential use cases, risks, and a framework for future actions.

Ms. Perez concluded by reiterating the importance of Subcommittee feedback on these proposals or any new ideas to help define the future scope of the program, emphasizing that this discussion is for planning purposes related to the increased budget.

The discussion following Ms. Perez's presentation focused primarily on the proposed Urban Air Mobility (UAM) study. Mr. Ames opened the floor for immediate feedback before formal decisions. Mr. Keith Meurlin strongly supported initiating the UAM study, highlighting that the technology is advancing much faster than regulation and airspace management, particularly in a restricted area like theirs. He noted that Virginia is already actively involved in UAM pilot programs. Mr. Canan cautioned that any proposed projects, including UAM, must be allowable uses of AIP funds and align with FAA guidelines, emphasizing the need for coordination. Mr. Jeffrey Breeden agreed with the UAM study's relevance but advised caution, reminding the group that states are also conducting similar studies and emphasizing the need to avoid duplicating efforts. He also referenced a problematic helicopter study COG undertook years ago, urging mindfulness of potential sensitivities associated with such initiatives in the DC area, and posed the question of what specific "problem" the UAM study aims to solve beyond mere identification.

The final discussion included two main points from Mr. Khan. First, he suggested that the proposed economic impact study incorporate aspects of resilience planning, citing insights gained from a recent training session in DC and a critical incident at Asheville, NC. He highlighted how airports serve as critical hubs during crises, often having independent power grids and generators, underscoring their vital economic impact in emergency situations. Second, Mr. Khan advocated for the Subcommittee to explore new technologies like Ground-Based Augmentation Systems (GBAS). He noted that other major airport authorities across the country are adopting such innovations, which can improve aircraft positioning, reduce emissions and wait times, and lessen noise pollution—benefits already seen at airports like Reagan National (the first in the US to implement it), Boston, and JFK.

## **7. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

The roundtable discussion primarily featured updates from MAA, represented by Mr. Ames. He announced that Shannetta Griffin, former FAA Associate Administrator for Airports, officially began as MAA's new CEO/Director on April 7th, bringing extensive experience from both airport and FAA roles. Mr. Ames indicated that this was likely why Mr. Kevin Clarke was absent, as he was with Ms. Griffin for community engagement.

Mr. Ames also provided an update on Maryland's engagement with Advanced Air Mobility (AAM). He reported that MAA is actively responding to a Governor's executive order to develop AAM policies for the state, focusing on foundational guidelines rather than directives to individual airports. He noted that Frederick Airport already has charging stations, and Martin State Airport is expected to get one for electric, conventional take-off aircraft within the next 6-12 months, which will be open to the public. Mr. Ames expressed enthusiasm for AAM opportunities and stated that MAA conducts its own public impact statements to assess regional benefits. He then concluded his updates.

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business.

## **9. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned. The next Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2025. It will be held as a virtual meeting.