

NOW BOARDING 

MODERN SKIES SUMMIT

APRIL 21, 2026



HOSTED BY U.S. TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY SEAN P. DUFFY
AND FAA ADMINISTRATOR BRYAN BEDFORD



WELCOME TO THE MODERN SKIES SUMMIT.

Since day one, the Trump Administration has been laser-focused on delivering a world-class air traffic control system the American people deserve. For decades, our national airspace was defined by neglect—a patchwork of ancient tech and a shortage of air traffic controllers.

Those days are over.

Thanks to President Trump and our partners in Congress, the One Big Beautiful Bill has unleashed a historic **\$12.5 billion** investment into our skies.

In just one year, we have moved at the Speed of Trump to:

- Replace almost **50%** of all copper wires
- Convert about **270** radio sites nationwide
- Install new surface awareness systems at **54** airports
- Transition **17** towers to electronic flight strips

And even more state-of-the-art upgrades are coming to an airport near you by the end of 2028.

We have also supercharged the air traffic controller pipeline, recruiting a **record-breaking 2,400 new hires since last March**, and reached our highest staffing levels in six years. We are finding the best and brightest and equipping them with the tools to succeed.

Across the country, more than **4,600 FAA sites** are being overhauled with new radars, digital voice switches and training simulators. This massive effort requires massive manpower: we estimate this modernization project taking more than 10 million total labor hours, or **1.5 million working days**. This is the largest project to impact our skies since the invention of commercial flight.

After many years of stopping and starting, the Trump Administration is doing this modernization plan the right way. From welders to programmers, we have employed **21 specialized labor categories** and are working with **52 vendors**. We are investing in American manufacturing and the patriots who build these vital tools.

Today, you will hear from the experts working around the clock to build a system that is safer, more predictable, and more convenient for every American family and business.

America has always been a nation of builders—a legacy forged through innovation, grit, and American will. We are tapping into that tradition today to usher in the Golden Age of Transportation.

Enjoy the summit. Let's get to work.

Sean P. Duffy

U.S. Transportation Secretary



ITINERARY

10:00 a.m. Arrivals

10:10 a.m. Program Begins

10:15 a.m. Keynote Remarks from U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy

10:30 a.m. Remarks from Airlines for America President & CEO Governor Chris Sununu

10:35 a.m. Remarks from National Air Traffic Controllers Association President Nick Daniels

10:45 a.m. Presentation with FAA & Peraton

10:50 a.m. “What’s Next” with FAA Administrator Bedford

11:00 a.m. Q&A

11:10 a.m. Exhibit Tours

12:15 p.m. Departures



WHAT WE'VE DELIVERED

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COMING TO AN AIRPORT NEAR YOU

The Trump Administration is all about creating a better, safer, more convenient travel for families. That's why we are investing in state-of-the-art technology, unleashing innovation through electronic vertical takeoff and landing vehicles (eVTOLs) and drones, and attracting more air traffic controllers. These initiatives will make our skies safer, offer innovative new transportation and product-delivery options, and make air travel more seamless.

By the end of 2028, we will have:

5,000

new high speed network connections on fiber, satellite, and wireless

27,000

new radios

450

new digital voice switches

612

state-of-the-art radars

44

airports with new replacement surface radars

200

airports with Surface Awareness Initiative surveillance technology

89

airports with new Terminal Flight Data Manager tools

435

air traffic control facilities with new Enterprise Information Display Systems

113

air traffic control towers with new Tower Simulation Systems





Surface Movement Radar installation at Houston Hobby International Airport

SUPERCHARGING OUR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER PIPELINE

We are building a 21st-century sky, but the heart of that system will always be our people. Upgrading our radars and fiber optics is a massive win, but our efforts are moot if we don't level up our workforce. A fully staffed workforce of patriots is the only way to ensure our skies remain the safest in the world for American families.

- Reached our highest staffing levels in six years
- Staffed our towers with approximately 11,000 controllers and more than 4,000 trainees in the pipeline
- Hired a record-breaking nearly 2,400 controllers since last March
- Recruited 20% more controllers in 2025 than 2024
- Graduated the largest-ever monthly class from the FAA Academy in August 2025
- Shaved more than five months off the time-to-hire process
- Incentivized the best and brightest with significant bonuses to older controllers to delay retirement AND cash awards to new hires
- Had the fastest application pace in American history for controllers

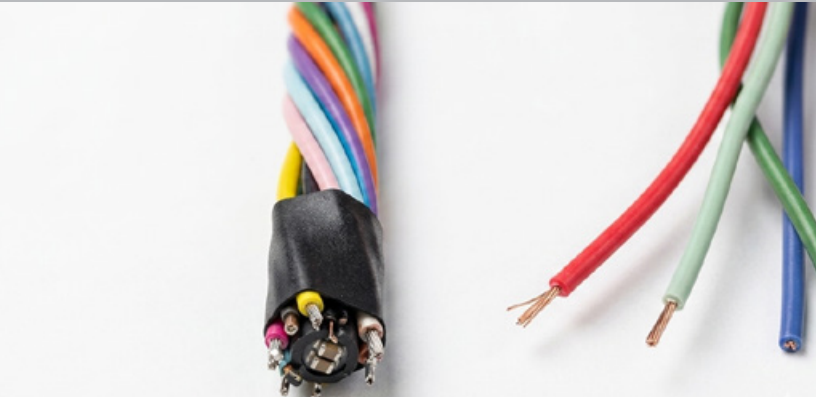




Telecommunications Infrastructure Replacement (TIR) at Houston Hobby International Airport

EXHIBIT GUIDE

TELECOMMUNICATIONS serves as the communications backbone for the National Airspace System connecting nearly 5,000 FAA facilities, radars, voice systems, and automation.



THEN

For years, the air traffic telecommunication system ran on copper wiring dating back to the 1960s and patched up with electrical tape.

NOW

Today, the Trump Administration is replacing the outdated wiring with high-speed fiber 5G wireless or LEO capabilities to prevent outages that cripple air travel and ensure communication is secure across the entire system.

RADIOS provide the air-to-ground communication link that allows controllers to issue instructions, clearances, and advisories to pilots throughout the flight.



THEN

When using older radios, pilots and controllers encounter static, crackling and missed words.

NOW

We're modernizing digital radios to improve reliability, clarity, and coverage across the National Airspace System. We've already upgraded more than 3,000 radios, and more than 20,000 new radios will be in place by the end of 2028.



EXHIBIT GUIDE

VOICE SWITCHES connect radios together so the right people can hear each other at the right time.



THEN

Most voice switches are analog, meaning controllers have to push a button to connect two copper wires together—like an old-fashioned switchboard.

NOW

We are installing brand new digital voice switches, enabling controllers to more easily switch channels and connect faster than ever before. We've already installed more than 40 nationwide, and 450 will be in place by 2028.

ENTERPRISE INFORMATION DISPLAY SYSTEM (E-IDS) is an all-in-one dashboard, equipping controllers with the precise data they need to manage traffic safely and efficiently.



THEN

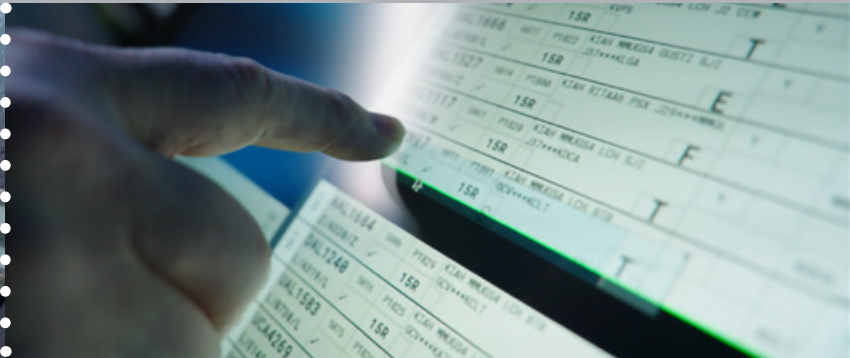
Controllers have used a system that is driven by floppy disks and an antiquated operation system for critical information such as weather, NOTAMS and airport status.

NOW

E-IDS gives controllers a single platform that pulls that data into one view. Instead of searching for info, they have immediate access to everything they need to make split-second decisions. We are installing E-IDS at more than 400 air traffic facilities nationwide.

EXHIBIT GUIDE

FLIGHT STRIPS display key flight information and record real-time instructions—making them a key tool controllers use to track aircraft, manage sequencing, and maintain situational awareness.



THEN

Controllers in most towers still use paper flight strips. They arrange them on a board to line up departures and pass them along to the next controller who's handling the aircraft. This takes time – time that controllers could otherwise spend monitoring the aircraft they're handling. And sometimes paper strips fall on the floor, requiring controllers to take their eyes off the airfield to find them.

NOW

We are digitizing this process with electronic flight strips. This will improve safety, ease controller workload, and increase efficiency. By the end of 2028, 89 towers will have electronic flight strips.

RADARS enable controllers to identify and track aircraft position and altitude.



THEN

Many of our radars were installed in the 1970s. They often break down, and because of their age the maintenance is expensive.

NOW

New radars are rolling out nationwide to help controllers keep planes separated and manage traffic flow in an airspace that's only getting more crowded. We're replacing more than 600 radars nationwide.



EXHIBIT GUIDE

SURFACE MOVEMENT RADAR (SMR) provides controllers at 44 of the busiest U.S. airports with real-time surveillance of aircraft and vehicle movements on airport runways and taxiways and alert controllers to potential conflicts before they happen. SMRs are particularly important during low-visibility or congested conditions.



THEN

SMR systems date back to the 1990s and when they break down parts aren't always readily available.

NOW

We're replacing them with modern SMRs to ensure controllers have the clearest picture of what is happening on the ground at airports to prevent conflicts and keep everyone safe. By the end of 2028, 44 airports are on track to get new SMRs.

SURFACE AWARENESS INITIATIVES (SAI) allows controllers to track aircraft and vehicles in real-time in any weather condition, and where aircraft may be out of sight from the control towers.

SAI gives controllers another tool to keep airport operations running safely, using Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) data from aircraft and vehicles, enabling controllers to see surface traffic. So far, we've installed SAI at 54 airports, and it will be installed at more than 200 airports nationwide.



EXHIBIT GUIDE

TOWER SIMULATION SYSTEM (TSS) is a state-of-the-art training simulator that allows air traffic controllers to practice real-world tower operations before working live traffic and for their recurrent training.

TSS improves controller proficiency in complex scenarios and accelerates certification by reducing training time for new and transferring controllers. This world-class system will be installed at more than 100 towers nationwide.



WHAT'S NEXT

America's national airspace is the busiest in the world. At any moment there are more than 5,000 flights in the air. With the integration of eVTOLs and drones, the congestion is only expected to increase.

Right now we are managing our skies with multiple systems, resulting in siloed schedules and expected delays for passengers. We need a more modern, cohesive system to optimize our airspace earlier and provide the reliable air travel experience our passengers deserve.

ATC shouldn't have to use more than a dozen systems to manage our airspace.

Now that we are investing \$12.5 billion in making our skies healthy with new equipment and upgraded technology, we can focus on:

REDUCING DELAYS

STREAMLINING SCHEDULES

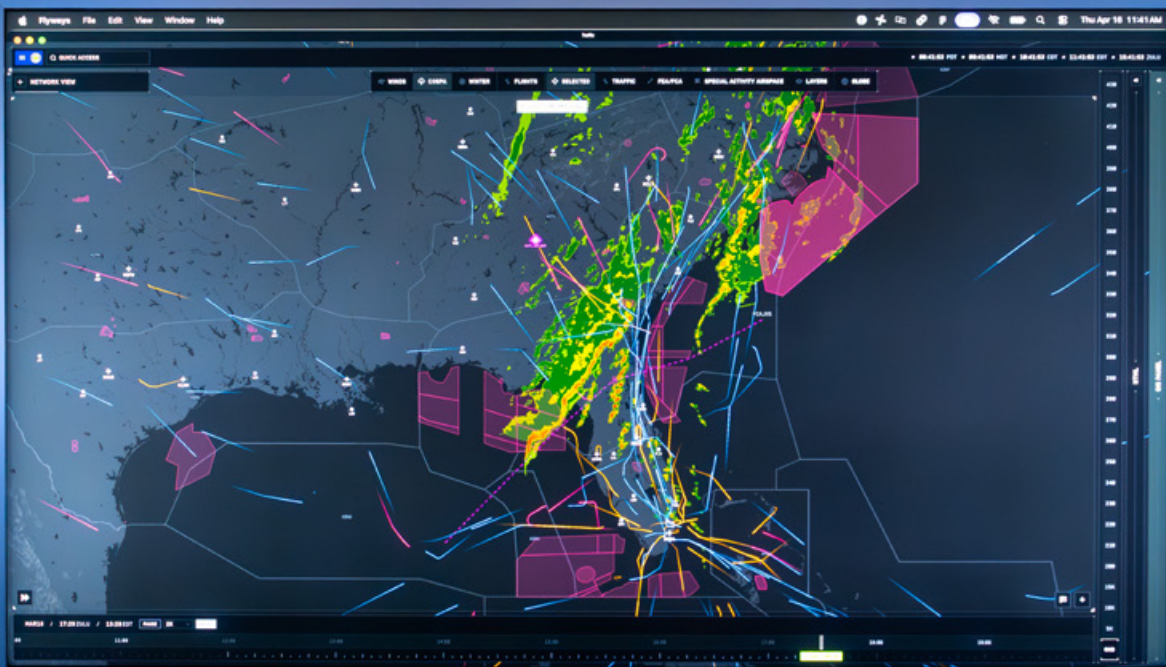
DECONFLICTING TRAFFIC

The way airlines schedule flights create major bottlenecks throughout the day, leading to overscheduling during peak hours. We begin every day with thousands of built-in delays because airlines often try to depart and land at the same time.

We need **modernized software** that uses AI to strategically streamline schedules and traffic flow and have a **common automation platform** that enables easier training and quicker safety enhancements. With these new tools, we can deliver reduced delays for passengers, more predictable schedules for airports, more efficient flight paths for pilots, and lower operating costs for airlines.

No software or platform like these exists on the market today. This is one of the reasons why we are asking Congress for additional funding — to build platforms that will meet our specific needs.

This development represents the next crucial phase in delivering a strong air space that will serve America for decades.



NOW BOARDING ✈️

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An exclusive ticket to a behind-the-scenes event on how USDOT is making flying faster and safer for you

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U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**