

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1386

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a pilot program to assess the operational benefits of remote air traffic control towers, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2017

Mr. KATKO (for himself, Mr. LIPINSKI, and Mrs. COMSTOCK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a pilot program to assess the operational benefits of remote air traffic control towers, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. REMOTE TOWER PILOT PROGRAM FOR RURAL**
4 **OR SMALL COMMUNITIES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
6 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transpor-
7 tation shall establish a pilot program under which, upon
8 approval of an application submitted by an operator of a
9 public-use airport, the Secretary shall install and operate

1 at the airport a remote air traffic control tower in order
2 to assess the operational benefits of remote air traffic con-
3 trol towers.

4 (b) APPLICATIONS.—The operator of an airport seek-
5 ing to participate in the pilot program shall submit to the
6 Secretary for approval an application that is in such form
7 and contains such information as the Secretary may re-
8 quire.

9 (c) SELECTION CRITERIA.—

10 (1) SELECTION OF AIRPORTS.—From among
11 the applications submitted under subsection (b), the
12 Secretary, after consultation with representatives of
13 labor organizations representing operators and em-
14 ployees of the air traffic control system, shall select
15 for participation in the pilot program 7 airports as
16 follows:

17 (A) One nonhub, primary airport.

18 (B) Three nonprimary airports without ex-
19 isting air traffic control towers.

20 (C) Two airports with air traffic control
21 towers participating in a program established
22 under section 47124 of title 49, United States
23 Code.

24 (D) One airport selected at the discretion
25 of the Secretary.

1 (2) PRIORITY SELECTION.—In selecting from
2 among the applications submitted under subsection
3 (b), the Secretary shall give priority to applicants
4 that can best demonstrate the capabilities and po-
5 tential of remote air traffic control towers.

6 (3) AUTHORITY TO REALLOCATE AIRPORT SE-
7 LECTION.—If the Secretary receives an insufficient
8 number of applications, the Secretary may reallocate
9 the distribution of airport sites described in para-
10 graph (1).

11 (4) MULTIPLE REMOTE FACILITIES.—If prac-
12 ticable and necessary, the 3 remote air traffic con-
13 trol towers installed at nonprimary airports pursu-
14 ant to paragraph (1)(B) may co-locate remote facili-
15 ties to assess the benefits and efficiencies of consoli-
16 dating such facilities.

17 (d) ASSET CLASSIFICATION.—A remote air traffic
18 control tower, including ancillary equipment, installed with
19 Government funds pursuant to this section shall be consid-
20 ered to be an air navigation facility.

21 (e) SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT PANEL.—

22 (1) SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT PANEL MEET-
23 ING.—Prior to the operational use of a remote air
24 traffic control tower, the Secretary shall convene a

1 safety risk management panel for the tower to ad-
2 dress any safety issues with respect to the tower.

3 (2) SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT PANEL BEST
4 PRACTICES.—The safety risk management panels
5 shall be created and utilized in a manner similar to
6 that of safety risk management panels previously es-
7 tablished for remote air traffic control towers, taking
8 into account best practices that have been developed.

9 (f) DEFINITIONS.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the following
11 definitions apply:

12 (A) AIR NAVIGATION FACILITY.—The term
13 “air navigation facility” has the meaning given
14 that term in section 40102(a) of title 49,
15 United States Code.

16 (B) REMOTE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL
17 TOWER.—The term “remote air traffic control
18 tower” means a remotely operated air naviga-
19 tion facility, including all necessary system com-
20 ponents, that provides the functions and capa-
21 bilities of an air traffic control tower.

22 (2) APPLICABILITY OF OTHER DEFINITIONS.—
23 In this section, the terms “nonhub airport”, “pri-
24 mary airport”, “public-use airport”, and “reliever

1 airport” have the meanings given such terms in sec-
2 tion 47102 of title 49, United States Code.

3 (g) SUNSET.—The pilot program shall terminate on
4 the day that is 5 years after the date of enactment of this
5 Act.

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