

**DEDICATION OF THE NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER
SEPTEMBER 28, 2012**

**REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER COREY D. O'BRIEN
CHAIRMAN OF THE BI-COUNTY AIRPORT BOARD**

Secretary LaHood, Mr. Huerta, on behalf of the Bi-County Airport Board, I would like to welcome both of you.

This is a great day for Northeastern Pennsylvania, but more important, it is a day that marks the continuation of a tremendous journey for our airport.

We have rebuilt this airport and transformed it into a model small hub with advanced equipment, technology and accommodations that are second to none.

Today with this ribbon cutting, it has now become a reality. Completion of this tower marks a rebirth for our airport. A truly pristine look for the airport and new growth possibilities for Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Over the last several years, the federal, state and county governments have invested \$136.2 million in renovations to place this airport on the cutting edge, \$18.5 million was invested in this air traffic control tower.

The tower's road to completion began with design concepts in mid-2008, followed by a groundbreaking in December 2009.

The old tower had served us well, but to compete we needed to start anew. The equipment was antiquated, various systems had reached their life span, and the tower was not adequate for today's needs.

Quite simply, the facility just limited our ability to grow and seek-out new opportunities.

That is not the case anymore. Since construction began in May 2010, we could see the potential this 118 foot tower could grasp for the region.

Many of the 150 people who worked on this project were men and women from Northeastern Pennsylvania's building trades, our local working families. We thank those members of our community who are responsible for building this incredible structure. Mr. Secretary and Mr. Huerta, those people worked tirelessly to not only build anew, but to make sure there were no service interruptions. That says a lot for our people.

The facility is truly state-of-the art, providing us with the capabilities to do great things with maximum safety and efficiency, which just so happens to be the mission elements that drive the FAA.

We have an improved touch screen communications system, weather display system, tracking system and visibility that we never had before. This is all growth.

Growth will bring new jobs and other opportunities to the area to further enhance both the airport's daily operations and its standing in the aviation industry. The facility will enable us to do more, and we want to do more.

Mr. Huerta, I would like to ask you to consider expanding our tower's airspace coverage that other centers would be willing to delegate.

Presently, the New York Air Route Traffic Control Center is handling the “down to the surface” airspace for Williamsport, a town to our West. This move would improve FAA efficiency and create additional jobs at our airport.

Our airport stands ready to serve in that capacity and hopes that the FAA would consider our facility. With what you have seen today, we are better suited than ever before to take on these new responsibilities.

I would also like to ask you to please consider this facility for pilot projects, especially those related to solar power, security, ground traffic or integration of unmanned systems.

This facility is in line with the seven priorities espoused by the FAA and we have successfully completed runway safety areas and wildlife hazards consistent with FAA guidance.

Several of your other priorities, safety management systems, solar power sustainability, through the fence operations, and integration of unmanned ariel systems, may impact us in the future, and we will address them with the same safety and efficiency commitment that we always adhere to.

This type of economic development would be very valuable to us. It would aid the growth of our aviation industry, create technical jobs for our residents, and allow our young talent to stay here instead of moving away and taking their expertise with them.

While the tower was the final jewel of this project, the dividends it will bring are just starting to come into focus.

It is a great day for Northeastern Pennsylvania and with the help of the Transportation Department, the FAA, and our committed staff, the sky is the limit for our area and this airport. Thank you.

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