

## **Senate Passes FAA Reauthorization with Expanded QBS; President Expected to Sign Bill into Law**

The Senate approved a final, five-year Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill on Wednesday that includes an ACEC-backed amendment to expand the use of Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) on federally funded airport projects. The House approved the bill last week and it now goes to the president for his signature.

The QBS provision requires that airports comply with Brooks Act procedures if any portion of a project utilizes Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds. This is designed to prevent agencies from segmenting state or local funds for A/E services in order to avoid federal QBS rules.

The bill holds AIP funding flat at \$3.35 billion per year for 2018-2023. It also authorizes an additional \$1.06 billion annually for airport improvement grants for small and medium-size airports, but those funds are not guaranteed and are subject to annual appropriations from the General Fund. FAA Facilities and Equipment is authorized at \$3.33 billion in 2018, rising to \$3.7 billion in 2023, also subject to annual appropriations.

The cap on Passenger Facility Charges remains at \$4.50 per flight segment, but the bill allows flexibility for more airports to collect the maximum amount. The U.S. Department of Transportation is directed to conduct a study of airport infrastructure needs and make recommendations on financial resources and options to upgrade the aviation system to meet projected passenger volumes.

For unmanned aircraft systems, the bill includes provisions to facilitate the integration of drones into the national airspace; bolster research, development, and testing programs; and authorize more risk-based permitting for commercial UAS operations.

[Click here](#) for a summary of the bill.