ACRP Problem No. 12-10-08

Guidebook For Managing Through the Fence Operations at General Aviation Airports

ACRP Staff Comments: No comments offered.

TRB Aviation Group Committees Comments: AVIATION GROUP EXEC. BOARD - Recommend. There is an absolute need to study this and find solutions to the myriad problems associated with through-the-fence operations. There is much confusion over existing regulations affecting these operations, primarily in the areas of revenue diversion. If the results could show solutions to the problems, it could be a “win-win-win” scenario for airports, users, and the FAA.

Review Panel Comments: Recommended — This is an important issue. While FAA guidance pertaining to residential issues just came out, it does not discuss industrial TTF issues. This is going to need to be addressed to ensure the economic viability of airports, especially for GA facilities. Therefore, the guidebook should focus on industrial TTF issues.

AOC Disposition: Approved and funded at $350,000. While the FAA discourages through-the-fence operations, noting they should only be considered at site-constrained airports as a last resort, they recognize that guidance is needed, since it's occurring. The guidance, therefore, should not be how to circumvent FAA rules. The scope should be broadened to include all airports, not only GA, and should include an economic component.
I. PROBLEM TITLE

Guidebook For Managing Through the Fence Operations at General Aviation Airports

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

A very significant issue faced by many general aviation airports is managing access to airport property from adjacent non-airport property parcels which are so called “through the fence” operations. Access to airport property is subject to specific FAA standards and criterion. A great number of existing “access” situations are legacies inherited from prior airport managers or managements and do not comply with FAA standards. Airports in such circumstances risk being subject to FAA compliance enforcement actions and/or sanctions. Such airports also increase their risk of creating or exacerbating problems in the areas of safety, equity to on-airport users, unfair competition with on-airport services, land use compatibility, and security, to name a few.

These circumstances and issues have proven to be difficult for many GA airport owners and operators to effectively manage. To assist general aviation airports with these issues, and to promote more uniform equity and fairness in problem solving, it is proposed herein to create a “Guidebook for Managing Through the Fence Operations at General Aviation Airports”. The Guidebook would assist airport owners and operators by clearly explaining FAA through the fence management requirements and provide well researched and practical guidance for managing through the fence airport operations issues including airport operational safety, FAA compliance requirements, equitable airport fee management, airport user equity, unfair competition, land use compatibility and security. At the moment, many airports are dealing with these issues in an uncoordinated and peace-meal manner. A “Guidebook For Managing Through the Fence Operations at General Aviation Airports” would provide well researched and documented guidance on these critical issues.

III. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to nationally and comprehensively evaluate “typical” through the fence operation problems, identify how they came to be, and provide practical and plain language guidance on alternatives for managing and controlling these situations. The Guidebook would provide on-point guidance for maintaining, or improving, compliance with FAA grant assurance requirements in respect to through the fence operations while concurrently managing associated problems with airport safety, equitable airport fees, airport user equity, unfair competition, land use compatibility and security.

IV. RESEARCH PROPOSED

This research should nationally and objectively sample and inventory “typical” airport through the fence situations, evaluate how they came to be, identify and inventory various best practices for managing airport through the fence operation situations, and develop plain language guidance for
airport owners, managements, and lay persons for equitably and fairly managing typically encountered airport through the fence operation. The specific lines of research inquiry should include:

(1) An assessment of how widespread airport through the fence operations are,
(2) An assessment of what the most typically encountered airport through the fence operations are,
(3) An assessment of what types of problems and inequities are created, if any, and their severity,
(4) Development of situational management “do's and don'ts”, and
(5) Identification of airport through the fence operations managerial best practices.

The research approach tasks will, at a minimum, include;

(a) No less than 8 through the fence operations case studies at geographically diverse airports of differing sizes,
(b) Confidential and non-confidential interviews and surveys with national experts on the management of through the fence operations,
(c) Confidential and non-confidential interviews and surveys with impacted airport officials,
(d) Confidential and non-confidential interviews and surveys with impacted airport users,
(e) A review of any existing or applicable statistics,
(f) A review of applicable case law, and
(g) A literature review.

V. ESTIMATE OF PROBLEM FUNDING AND RESEARCH PERIOD

• Recommended Funding: It is estimated that the funding required to execute this research is on the order of $570,000.
• Research Period: It is estimated that the amount of time required to execute this research is on the order of 18 months.

VI. URGENCY AND PAYOFF POTENTIAL

Airport through the fence operations occur at many airports and can often be difficult to manage or guide while maintaining airport user fairness, equity, safety and security. It is L.R. Kimball’s assessment that far too many airport managers and owners are struggling in their efforts to manage these situations and would greatly benefit from substantial and authoritative additional guidance.

With the sparse current data, it is impossible to estimate how much airport revenue is annually lost due to ineffective management of irregular through the fence airport operations. It certainly runs into many millions of dollars annually. Additionally, it is believed that irregular through the fence operations negatively impact legitimate airport FBO operations and deter investment into on-airport businesses and operations. The potential economic and service quality and safety impacts are considerable. The availability of a thoughtful Guidebook providing practical and uniform guidance for solving or managing typical airport through the fence issues could save, or result in the better investment, of many millions of airport and airport user dollars annually.

VII. RELATED RESEARCH

The Problem Statement development team is not aware of any recent “on-point” national research assessing the progress on compliance with FAA airport through the fence policies.
VIII. PERSON (S) DEVELOPING THE PROBLEM

This Problem Statement was developed by the following staff of the firms of Robert Kimball & Associates, Inc. (L.R. Kimball):

   Lead: Thomas P. Thatcher, Senior Research and Planning Manager
          Scott Gray, Director, Airport Management Services
   Supported By: Richard E. Genday, Senior Vice President, Transportation Services; Fran Strouse, Senior Technical Manager; Ronald Deck, Project Manager

IX. PROCESS USED TO DEVELOP PROBLEM STATEMENT

This Problem Statement was developed and written by the firm of L.R. Kimball and is a result of field and technical observations made by L.R. Kimball professional staff, several of whom have direct experience and expertise in managing general aviation through the fence operations. The process used to develop this Problem Statement started with a managerial commitment at L.R. Kimball to take a constructive but critical look at the complex issue of controlling and managing through the fence operations at general aviation airports and to commit to develop a Guidebook for doing the same. L.R. Kimball advises that there is detailed FAA policy on through the fence operations, but L.R. Kimball believes that the issue is sufficiently complex that assessing national compliance requires more research, perhaps under the ACRP aegis. To the knowledge of L.R. Kimball there has been no broad based study to evaluate national progress in achieving compliance with FAA policies on through the fence operations at general aviation airports. To develop this line of inquiry, L.R. Kimball convened several managerial staff meetings to identify, discuss, vet and prepare this Problem Statement and prepare it for submission to ACRP. After final review and editing of the draft Problem Statement, the final Problem Statement was put into form and executed and submitted to ACRP.

X. DATE AND SUBMITTED BY

   Submitted By: Richard E. Genday, Senior Vice President, Transportation Services
                 Thomas P. Thatcher, Senior Research and Planning Manager
                 L.R. Kimball
                 615 West Highland Street, P.O. Box 1000
                 Ebensburg, PA 15931
                 814-472-7700
                 Email: rick.genday@lrkimball.com

   Date: April 14, 2010