

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Pangborn Airport General Aviation Terminal Groundbreaking**

**August 12, 2024**

**Sen. Cantwell Opening Remarks**

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, Jim, thank you so much, what a great pleasure to be here, and to participate in what is going to be a tremendous groundbreaking on building capacity for more economic development and trade in this region.

Jim mentioned the CHIPS and Science Act, and I just want to say, that literally is all about building capacity so more of the manufacturing competitiveness that the United States needs to muster, and compete in, is too expensive to happen in places like Puget Sound and Silicon Valley. It needs to happen in more places. So we're counting on Wenatchee. We're counting on Wenatchee to help us carry this load.

I want to thank our representatives who are here, too, because obviously they helped in the state legislature. I want to thank the FAA for being here. And certainly want to thank all the Port Commissioners for their vision in making this facility today a reality.

We do want to welcome thousands of people to Wenatchee. We want to continue to have people come here, and to build on the capacity that this region has. As was described already, Pangborn's general aviation terminal is the front door to Wenatchee's great opportunities for tourists arriving not just here, but all the way up to the Canadian border.

The general aviation terminal building, built in 1960, as we see, I'm glad you're keeping the history there. I don't know, maybe somebody will come shoot a movie or something - by the way, Jack Black's mom lives in Omak, that's why Jack Black comes through here - the history here is amazing, but aviation is a catalyst for other economic development. We know that in the United States 80% of economic development happens within just 10 miles of an airport. So if you're not investing in your airport, you're not investing in your economy.

The airport plays an important role in contributing over \$250 million in economic impacts and supporting over 1200 jobs. So if you're an apple buyer or a supplier or an employee to one of the data centers by Microsoft, or just wanting to see the charm of the valley, you will benefit from the updating of this terminal.

Last year, as was mentioned, we were able to secure \$3 million in federal funds to get this project over the finish line, covering nearly 40% of total project costs. And the renovations to the terminal will help increase the building to a larger footprint and capacity and accessibility, and obviously energy efficiency, and the much needed space to accommodate those departing and arriving general aviation flights, and, very important, a new executive flight school.

I can't tell you how much pilot shortage is part of our general aviation challenges, and we need to have more flight training. A new flight training program will bring permanent jobs, flight instructors, flight managers, support future flight school graduates, and help support more flights in and out of the region.

So far, nearly 125,000 residents of the Wenatchee Valley are here and it's creating a vibrant community, but we need to do more. So yes, I want to thank Trent, the director of the airport who came and testified before the Commerce Committee to talk about the impacts on rural airports, the need for federal support, and the loud and clear message why the FAA bill signed into law in May needed the investment to encourage that infrastructure for small communities.

The \$4 billion per year that we got for the Airport Improvement Program was based on input that people told us right here in our state, why we needed to build this capacity. And so we literally got a 20% bump in that program, the biggest investment we've made in airports since 1960. So a really big, big, big opportunity for us to build capacity around our state.

For Pangborn that means an additional \$900,000 over the next two years, and improvements to the runway and the terminal building. And that's why we made sure that the FAA law decreased the share of costs that the rural airports had, and that's part of the conversation you just heard about from Jim. Because, literally, if you think about it, when we want you all as a community to take on these economic challenges and give manufacturers a more cost effective place to do business, we need to help you create that environment.

And that's what this project is, it's creating that environment. But guess what we had to do, we had to lower the cost share. It's not as if you have that much cost share, we're just bootstrapping here, and so that part of the FAA, bootstrapping, was critically important.

We also authorized a record level of funding for the Small Community Air Service Grant and the Essential Air Service programs. This is so important for our state. So many places help generate capacity by just being right in the ability to attract with those grants the essential service or the grant to - in Spokane's case, we got them a grant to go to LA and they turned the money back, because as soon as they established the flight, they saw what the capacity was, and they just gave the money back. So, I'm not saying that's going to happen here, but we are going to establish some more flights and help us build capacity.

And as mentioned, the National Guard moving in, and our response times to wildfires, very critically important, so I want to thank them. But it shows you why we need this additional capacity. I was just at the incident command this morning for their 7am brief, and I really want to applaud the men and women of the U.S. Forest Service, our Department of Natural Resources, the California Incident Command that's leading the charge up there, as well as the Chelan County Commissioners, the Chelan Firefighters, the Chelan Fire Sheriff, who literally is in charge of evacuation. We have challenges everywhere, but just imagine, his job is to figure out, every day, whether he has to evacuate that town, and the cost, so it's really bearing on Chelan County. And the National Park Service, they're all doing a really great job up there, creating a big fire line barrier that's trying to protect the town of Stehekin, and so we thank them for their hard work.

But all of this comes at a critical time in our state when we need to build capacity, when we need our guard to be here, and we're glad you're in that facility. But we need this facility to be, again, the door to Wenatchee. To say to people, this county and this region is open to business, and that we are going to continue to build capacity for opportunity and competitiveness right here in Washington State.

Thank you all very much.