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Green Airport Initiative

Background

Throughout the 1990s, a major issue for airports was that opportunities posed by airport growth were seemingly in conflict with requirements of environmental regulators and concerns of local residents. General conformity regulations stymied many airport construction projects. Communities felt that airports had fallen short in tackling the broad range of environmental issues associated with day to day operations. Case studies have shown that community activists are becoming increasingly effective in obstructing expansion plans unless their problems are adequately addressed and nuisance factors minimized. They also view the airport planning process with skepticism as a legal mechanism for skirting their concerns. The net result is reflected in the delays and rancor witnessed by Boston Logan in their 20 year effort to expand, as well as at other airports nationally.

The Remedy

The Green Airport Initiative (GAI) is designed to help airports achieve quick and measurable benefits in environmental quality and energy savings and reduce conflicts with local communities. Its goal is not to just to make airports greener but to accommodate their growth in a manner illustrating the principles of sustainable development and creating more livable communities. The GAI is not a mechanism for trading off airport growth for environmental quality but a strategy for increasing both.

In contrast to the traditional master planning process, the GAI is a proactive approach for an airport to develop an environmental posture that accommodates the community's concerns while still meeting all regulatory requirements. Through the mechanism of the GAI, cost-effective options for reducing community nuisance are identified. The GAI was conceived as a semi-autonomous environmental planning vehicle, although its findings and conclusions can easily be integrated into the master planning process.

The GAI fosters the consideration of innovative but proven technologies and operational practices that are tailored to the needs of the local community. By remaining independent, it creates a credible mechanism that engages the community in problem solving and then fosters cooperation to obtain the political and financial support to pursue strategies that speak to community concerns and opportunities. Operating in this capacity, the GAI can play a pivotal role in simultaneously addressing the goals of the airport and the community and creating an environment conducive to partnership and growth.

The GAI Process

The GAI is composed of two primary phases. The *baseline phase* can typically be completed within six months. The findings of this process dictate the magnitude of effort required to complete the *implementation phase* of the GAI. Where “showcase” opportunities exist for emerging technologies or operational practices, airports may be able to obtain supplemental government, Congressional, and private sector funding support. Throughout the process airports are presented opportunities for working with government at all levels, the private sector, and the local community to cultivate the support needed to implement key programs.

BASELINE

- **Document Environmental Profile** - Current accomplishments, which when linked are sometimes substantial, are often unrecognized by either the airport or the public.
- **Initiate Stakeholder Outreach** - Creating a process for cultivating constructive community involvement begins with outreach and designing a visioning process, which among other things acquaints the community with opportunities associated with improved operations.
- **Define Concepts and Opportunities** - Identifying innovative but proven strategies can simultaneously improve environmental quality, enhance energy efficiency, and reduce costs.

IMPLEMENTATION

- **Create an Implementation Roadmap** - Creating a blueprint for implementing and tracking the GAI sets the stage for program success.
- **Develop Detailed Project Plans** - Conducting a detailed analysis of strategies and developing a detailed and comprehensive work plan integrates GAI goals with other developments at the airport.
- **Secure Project Resources** - Obtaining the technical, in-kind, and financial resources necessary to implement key strategies reduces the airport’s outlay.
- **Measure and Verify Results** - Assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of programs implemented demonstrates the value of the GAI to the airport and community.

About CAP and the GAI

The Clean Airport Partnership, Inc. is a non-profit corporation established to help airports and communities work together to improve environmental quality. CAP’s implementation team is uniquely equipped to provide customized support to airports and communities across the country. The GAI is supported with funding from the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Rockefeller Family Fund, the U.S. Congress, and participating airports.



