



November 17th, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy

Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation

The Honorable Bernie Moreno

United States Senator

The Honorable Jon Husted

United States Senator

The Honorable Shontel M. Brown

United States Representative

Re: Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's Misguided Request to Close Burke Lakefront Airport

Dear Secretary Duffy, Senator Moreno, Senator Husted, and Representative Brown,

The Lakefront Airport Preservation Partnership (LAPP) represents key aviation stakeholders, users, businesses, and beneficiaries of the Burke Lakefront Airport (BKL). The LAPP is committed to long-term sustainability, support, and collaboration with government partners to secure the future of Cleveland's Burke Lakefront Airport.

BKL is critical national infrastructure that cannot be sacrificed for fleeting political gains. On behalf of the Lakefront Airport Preservation Partnership (LAPP), General Aviation (GA) operators, GA service providers, and other industry stakeholders, we ask that Cleveland's Burke Lakefront Airport remain open. Previous administrations in Cleveland have invested in and accepted grants to enhance Burke Lakefront Airport. Since 2005, the FAA has awarded

\$18.5 million in grant dollars to BKL, and the State of Ohio has awarded over \$1 million in state grant funding for runway improvements. By accepting these grants, the city has agreed to operate and maintain the airport, subject to the grant obligations outlined in Title 49, U.S.C., Subtitle VII, as amended. Temporary politicians should not be able to ignore or undo commitments made by their predecessors, which will have negative long-term impacts. Simply casting the airport to the wayside and placating to Mayor Bibb's wishes is not in the best interest of the public, the aviation system, or the City of Cleveland. The LAPP is also asking Mayor Bibb to engage with the aeronautical stakeholders at BKL, and we would be happy to host his administration on a meaningful conversation about his vision for Cleveland, and how the airport can continue to be sustainable and relevant.

The airport serves as a vital link for public safety, medevac operations, Coast Guard missions and training, flight training, educational opportunities, both personal and corporate aviation, recreation, and tourism of the greater Cleveland area. The mayor has offered no plan of how the current operations, tenants, and other users of the airport will be absorbed or replicated at other facilities. Federal law requires that closing a grant-obligated public use airport must "benefit the aviation system". This is impossible in this instance. There are no other airports currently positioned to acquire the influx of operations from BKL.

By the numbers, BKL generates \$76.6 million in annual economic activity based on data verified as part of the studies commissioned by the Cleveland City Council. The mayor also claims that the airport is underutilized and declining in operations. What the mayor refuses to realize, or accept, is that the lack of support from his administration is directly related to the perceived "lack of use". When long-term leaseholds are no longer offered and the airport is only supported minimally, private investments, aeronautical businesses, and users will try to relocate elsewhere or cease to exist. One must go beyond the numbers on a line and account for the actual use of the facility, as well as its true day-to-day operations. According to data from the Ohio Department of Transportation, 281 jobs are tied directly to airport operations, while over 500 jobs can be attributed to the larger impact the airport has on the Northeast Ohio region.

As Mayor Bibb stated in his October 22nd letter, "a once-in-a-century opportunity" does exist in this circumstance. Rather than shutter a national asset, which has been operating since 1947 as a public-use airport, this is an opportunity for the City of Cleveland to invest. History matters. Our leaders of the past envisioned aviation as a link to economic opportunity and the freedom for citizens to move about the country. This still holds true. Governor James A. Rhodes was a savvy proponent of aviation, so much so that he led an initiative to construct an airport in every county of Ohio. The state of Ohio has continued that investment today, as the most recent state budget more than doubled aviation infrastructure spending over the next two years to over \$40 million. BKL is eligible for those state dollars, along with FAA Airport Improvement Program funds, to construct and rehabilitate critical airfield infrastructure. Unfortunately, this mayor has chosen to opt out of state and federal dollars to incentivize

closing the airport. The aviation industry is on the verge of new technologies that will impact the lives of every citizen, including the automation and electrification of an entirely new type of aircraft, Electric Vertical Takeoff and Land (eVTOL). BKL is strategically positioned to be advantageous in the support and operation of this new technology.

The mayor's request to close the airport is misguided and shortsighted. While the state of Ohio, other major cities, and counties are strategically planning, investing, and operating general aviation airports, Cleveland is looking the other way. The closure of BKL will have a ripple effect across the nation and ultimately harm the city and the aviation system. The mayor has not presented a plan to the aeronautical stakeholders of how their operations will be integrated into neighboring airports, how the infrastructure will be replicated at other facilities, or whether they will be given the opportunity to be successful elsewhere.

The best use of the property is an airport. The LAPP and undersigned are committed to collaborating with local leaders, aeronautical users, and the public to preserve the use of Burke Lakefront and to find new avenues for investment in the current property as it exists today. Please also see the attached contextual document for specific impacts and operations of users of the Burke Lakefront Airport.

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association AOPA
Aitheras Aviation Group
Argonaut Aerospace and Maritime
Big Play Sports Network
Cleveland National Airshow
International Women's Air and Space Museum
Inspire Aviation
Northeast Ohio Pilots Association NEOPA
Zanesville Aviation
Zone Aviation

cc:

Mayor Juston Bibb, City of Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland City Council

Chris Ronayne, Cuyahoga County Executive

Cuyahoga County Council

James Bryant, Administrator, Ohio Dept. of Transportation, Office of Aviation

John Mayfield, Manager, Detroit Airport District Office, FAA