

Commercial Aeronautics Loan and Loan Forgiveness Program

Purpose: State sponsored and administered loan program available to assist Washington State students in the pursuit of a career in the aviation industry. Combines state funds with other training programs to tackle the aircraft pilot, instructor pilot, and maintenance technician shortages.

Method: Proposed legislation will establish a commercial aeronautics loan and loan forgiveness program to provide students in Washington State with an additional funding opportunity to pursue a career in aviation.

Background: The aviation industry is experiencing an alarming shortage in aircraft pilots, maintenance technicians and instructor pilots that is forecasted by industry leaders such as Boeing to increase rapidly in the near future. This loan program is an effort between WSDOT, industry, and the state's aviation programs to mitigate the shortages in Washington State, help students meet the high costs associated with aviation programs, and maintain Washington's competitiveness as an aerospace state.

Objective: Establish a low interest rate loan program to provide funds to students wishing to pursue a career as a professional pilot, aviation maintenance technician or as an instructor pilot. Washington State Department of Transportation will administer the loan program and provide up to 60% loan forgiveness to individuals meeting the criteria as an incentive to keep graduates working in the field and remaining within the state.

Current Situation: Over the next 20 yrs, approximately 790,000 aircraft pilots and 754,000 maintenance technicians worldwide are needed to meet the demand created as the current workforce enters into retirement and the aviation industry continues to grow.

Recommendations for a path forward:

- We recommend support of legislation that creates the program.
- It is recommended that allowable percentage of annual funds be distributed from the state aeronautics account to fund aviation education loans.
- If funds provided for aviation education loans are not exhausted in any given year, it is recommended that the remainder of the funds be used for airport infrastructure improvement grants.