***It’s Official! – FAA Receives Mandate to Install Surveillance Display in SBD Tower***

*On May 16th President Biden signed the “****Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act” into law. T****his bill is more commonly referred to as the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.**The approved bill includes language requiring the FAA Administrator to quickly certify if towers in the FAA’s contract tower program have a STARS Remote Surveillance Display system. The STARS display includes both terminal radar and ADS-B data to help controllers see traffic. The bill language requires the FAA Administrator to ensure that federal contract towers like SBD have the minimum equipment needed to function, which includes surveillance display systems. Under the bill, the FAA must install the radar display systems into the FAA contract towers within two years of the bill’s enactment. So, the FAA is now on the clock to install surveillance display systems in contract towers like SBD.*

*How did this happen? The RAA raised the visibility of the lack of surveillance equipment at SBD with Representative Pete Aguilar’s office. His aides, Mott Tovar, Constituent Services Representative, and Elise Sugarman, Legislative Director have been extremely helpful in getting visibility of this issue raised to a point that led to this requirement being addressed in the bill.  As part of this, we learned SBD is not the only airport that needs surveillance equipment. Mark Gibbs, SBD Director of Aviation, AOPA, and certain FAA personnel were also very helpful in getting the visibility of this issue raised.*

*Representative Aguilar met with FAA Administrator Whitaker about SBD’s need for a surveillance display system. The Administrator referenced the FAA bill language directly and that the FAA will be working on installing these radar display systems. He said it would take 18–24 months to install all of the display systems in contract towers. Administrator Whitaker said SBD would be a priority contract tower to get the surveillance display system. Representative Aguilar’s office will be following up with Whitaker’s staff to see if they actually have a list of priority towers and where SBD is on that list. Rep. Aguilar asked what metrics the FAA uses to determine if the tower is a priority to receive a display system and they said it’s based on existing data and the airport’s growth trajectory.*

*We will keep all advised as to the progress being made to get SBD tower the required surveillance display.*

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A landscape with mountains in the background

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