



DULUTH AIRPORT AUTHORITY

May 7, 2025

Transportation Conference Committee Members
Minnesota House and Senate
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for House Position on Duluth International Airport Air Traffic Control Tower – HF2438 / SF2082

Dear Members of the Transportation Conference Committee,

I respectfully urge you to support the House position in HF2438 and include \$10 million from the state airports fund for a grant to the Duluth Airport Authority to design, construct, furnish, and equip a new air traffic control tower base building at the Duluth International Airport. This provision is essential to advancing a critical regional infrastructure project that has broad bipartisan support and the backing of both the City of Duluth and St. Louis County.

The current air traffic control tower, which has served the region for more than 70 years, is outdated and no longer meets the operational and safety needs of a modern airport. Replacing it is vital to maintaining safe, efficient, and uninterrupted aviation services for both civilian and military users, totaling 87,000 operations per year.

Duluth International Airport plays a central role in Minnesota's transportation, economic, and security infrastructure. It supports:

- Passenger air service for northeastern Minnesota,
- The 148th Fighter Wing of the Minnesota Air National Guard, and
- Cirrus Aircraft, the world's top manufacturer of piston-powered aircraft.

In total, the airport supports more than 4,000 jobs and contributes \$1.4 billion annually to Minnesota's economy. A new air traffic control tower will ensure the airport remains competitive, safe, and prepared for growth in commercial, cargo, medical, and military air traffic.

Importantly, this \$10 million state investment leverages over \$52 million in federal funding — a major return for Minnesota taxpayers. Delaying this appropriation could jeopardize those federal dollars and stall a shovel-ready project with clear regional and statewide benefits.

For all these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Conference Committee to adopt the House language and fund this project in the final transportation bill.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this vital infrastructure need.

Sincerely,

Tom Werner, A.A.E.
Executive Director
Duluth Airport Authority