



PASS Has Positive Impact on Aviation

Approximately 1.5 million lines of code. Ten years. Three presidential administrations. One pandemic.

According to PASS union representative Mike Geiman, that's all it took to get the Terminal Flight Data Manager (TFDM) operational at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport in October. And with the busy holiday travel season upon us, it is important that the public know just how important PASS represented employees at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) are when it comes to safer air travel.

TFDM is a tower-based Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) program at the FAA that will automate flight plans and integrate them with surveillance data to create accurate, real-time predictive tools for the terminal environment. TFDM will share data among controllers, aircraft operators and airports so they can better manage traffic flow. With key information—such as flight, surveillance and traffic management information—controllers can make informed decisions on the surface to improve traffic flow and decrease the time a plane is spent waiting to taxi, which will, in turn, reduce fuel use and carbon emissions. But to do that, the controllers need the FAA Technical Operations workforce represented by PASS to help develop, test and deploy the system.

“TFDM is another program that the FAA and industry are working together to improve safety, time efficiency and reduce carbon emissions,” said Geiman.

Before the pandemic began, the FAA planned to rollout TFDM at 89 sites but funding issues cut that number to 48. Indianapolis International Airport is next to go online in April 2023, followed by Phoenix, Raleigh-Durham, John Glenn Columbus and Las Vegas airports for the 2023 calendar year.

The hands-on involvement and expertise of PASS during the development of TFDM—and throughout the pandemic—was critical to the successful launch at the Cleveland airport. The union's participation on the project is a result of professional development opportunities bargained into PASS contracts with the FAA.

“I can't stress enough how essential these programs are for the safety of the National Airspace System and the American flying public,” said National President Dave Spero. “Any time we can have our members with their experience and technical knowledge at the table, we can make the systems better and safer.”

The success of the deployment of TFDM at the Cleveland Hopkins ATCT completes one of the milestones for the FAA's NextGen programs. As the agency reported to the NextGen Advisory Subcommittee a few days later, “This achievement completes the Build 1 IOC [Initial Operating Capability] milestone, which was an FAA Surface and Data Sharing NAC implementation commitment.” PASS also has a representative on that subcommittee, another way for the union to



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have an impact on NextGen programs.

When PASS members are able to play a major role in the development and implementation of new technology, their impact is substantial—and the speed, efficiency and benefits seen agency-wide are far greater.