



PASS and the Modernization of the National Airspace System

The FAA's ambitious plans to modernize the nation's air traffic control system (called BNATCS by the administration) represents one of the most significant efforts impacting the National Airspace System (NAS) and the FAA Technical Operations workforce responsible for maintaining it. Tech Ops employees are among the 11,000 FAA employees represented by PASS.

While modernization is necessary, the speed and process of these efforts must be tempered with ensuring the safety of the aviation system, which means that stakeholder involvement is essential. To that end, PASS has a dedicated representative to the FAA's Program Management Office (PMO), and for the BNATCS. This PASS member ensures that the voice of front-line employees is heard.

Since the modernization efforts began, the agenda has moved forward at a rapid pace, reshaping long-standing processes and expectations, and this accelerated timeline is already having real impacts on employees.

PASS has consistently emphasized that modernization cannot come at the expense of training adequacy, workforce readiness or system safety. Under a contract article with the FAA, PASS has established a slate of front-line union members to provide oversight, workforce advocacy and operational insight throughout the program's development and deployment. This dedicated team exists to provide real-world operational experience and candid feedback to decision-makers who may lack direct field experience.

They depend on direct input—honest feedback—from their colleagues working with air traffic control systems every day to fully understand current working conditions and the cumulative effects of the ongoing changes. With the FAA planning to rely extensively on existing employees to support modernization, meaningful involvement from them is essential.

The installation phase of BNATCS presents a valuable opportunity for hands-on training prior to on-the-job training. Equally important, technicians must take ownership of their sites and equipment to ensure long-term operational success and safety for the American flying public.

PASS will continue to monitor modernization implementation closely, engage through its designated reps and advocate for training, staffing and safety protections that reflect real-world operational demands. And that workforce readiness is treated as a cornerstone of aviation safety—not an afterthought.