

PHOENIX – Arizona’s economic future will depend on federal investment in Valley airports, said U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell. Today, Mitchell and House Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Costello, D-Ill., toured the Sky Harbor and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway airports to evaluate the long-term infrastructure needs of the facilities.

Mitchell said that, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, demand for air travel in the Phoenix metropolitan area is growing at double the national rate. If the airports cannot invest in infrastructure, air travel costs will rise and delays could become more frequent. Mitchell is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation.

“This isn’t just about reducing congestion,” said Mitchell. “It is about growing our economy. Our airports are powerful economic engines, with tremendous potential for growth. And if we’re serious about growing our economy and creating jobs we need to tap into that potential.”

Seven U.S. airports account for 72 percent of all airport delays. Sky Harbor is in danger of becoming the nation’s next aviation bottleneck, Mitchell said. [Source: [Federal Aviation Administration](#)]

Sky Harbor is already the nation’s 8th busiest airport, and Phoenix is one of eight metropolitan areas nationwide that will need additional air capacity by 2025. [Source: [Federal Aviation Administration](#)]

Mitchell and Costello learned details about Sky Harbor’s new automated train system, which will link the airport and light rail to ease congestion at Sky Harbor.

Mitchell has been a strong advocate for investment in the Gateway Airport. According to the East Valley Tribune, Mitchell “secured \$1.75 million in federal funding to improve taxiways at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport last year. The East Valley airport should be developed further as a reliever to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, the eighth-busiest airport in the country.” [Source: [East Valley Tribune](#), Feb. 22, 2008]