

## *PEW ANALYSIS FINDS BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FLOWING TO “LOW PRIORITY” AIRPORT PROJECTS*

Washington— The federal government has funded more than 3,100 airport construction and rehabilitation projects costing nearly \$2 billion from 2005-2009, despite the fact they received priority ratings well below the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) threshold for projects consistent with national goals and objectives, according to Subsidyscope, an initiative of the Pew Economic Policy Group. These data were compiled and released today by Subsidyscope, as part of its new searchable database which shows National Priority Ratings (NPRs)—self-assigned by FAA—for every airport that received a grant under the agency’s Airport Improvement Program (AIP) over the last five years.

The AIP database also includes information on funds committed under the stimulus plan, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Of the more than \$1 billion in federal stimulus AIP grants awarded from March 16-September 18, more than 90 projects encompassing more than \$270 million had NPRs well below the FAA’s stated minimum ratings for stimulus funding, representing nearly 27 percent of all such funding.

“With expenditures running into the billions, these findings show the benefit of making spending data more accessible. The public deserves to know the criteria used for determining how and when to spend taxpayer dollars,” said Marcus Peacock, director of Subsidyscope. “So far, these data raise more questions than they answer.”

Subsidyscope analysis also reveals that a number of small airports that accommodate as few as one paying passenger each year received significant amounts of federal funding from AIP. The three airports with the highest AIP funding per enplanement, or paying passenger, are Fall River Mills Airport (CA) \$271,825, Cecil Field (FL) \$270,063 and Marana Regional (AZ) \$235,306.

The AIP funds projects meant to enhance safety, protect the environment or otherwise improve the nation’s aviation system. Funded principally by revenue from ticket and fuel surcharges, and therefore largely by passengers using large commercial airports, the program disbursed \$3.5 billion in grants last year. However in fiscal year 2007, these large and medium hubs received only 33 percent of AIP funding, while small commercial and general aviation airports received 64 percent. General aviation alone received nearly 25 percent.

In terms of sheer dollars awarded, Los Angeles International Airport fared best during the five-year period, receiving \$280 million through the AIP. It was followed by Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport (\$262 million), Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (\$235 million) and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport (\$209 million).

The database and analysis was released as part of Subsidyscope’s broader look at all federal spending on subsidy programs in the transportation sector. Subsequent analysis will look at other sectors including energy, healthcare, non-profits, defense, agriculture and housing.

Please visit [www.subsidyscope.org](http://www.subsidyscope.org) for access to the transportation data as well as further information on federal subsidies.

*Subsidyscope is an initiative of Pew's Economic Policy Group and aggregates information on federal subsidies from multiple sources into a comprehensive, searchable, open-source database, which serves as a gateway for press, policymakers, advocates and the public. The project is guided by a broad and bipartisan advisory board of budget, fiscal and transparency experts and is assisted by its technology partner, the Sunlight Foundation.*

*The Pew Charitable Trusts ([www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org)) is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.*

###