

# SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 1776

SPONSOR: Transportation Committee and Senator Jones

SUBJECT: NASA's Small Aircraft Transportation

DATE: April 5, 2001                      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	McAuliffe	Meyer	TR	Favorable/CS
2.	_____	_____	AGG	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

This CS would make Florida a participant along with NASA, the Federal Aviation Administration, the aircraft industry, and various universities in the Small Aircraft Transportation System (SATS) project.

SATS is an integration of new technologies that includes small airplanes with high-tech, user-friendly cockpits, quiet jet propulsion systems working with integrated airports' infrastructure technology to allow precision landings even in inclement weather. SATS strategies are conceived to affect the nature of aviation operational capabilities for airports, airspace, and air traffic and commercial services. The strategy focuses on airborne technologies that expand the use of airports with excess capacity as well as underutilized, unmanaged airspace for transportation use.

This CS provides an appropriation of \$3,290,500 from the General Revenue Fund to purchase the high-technology electronic airport infrastructure used to develop a network of 10 airports statewide for SATS experiments in 2003, and to help establish an operations command center to coordinate all flying and operational activities undertaken under the authority of this CS.

**II. Present Situation:**

Florida currently has 111 general aviation airports, 29 commercial airports, and over 700 private airports. A Commercial Service Airport is an airport qualified to operate under Federal Aviation Regulations Part 139 with regularly scheduled commercial service operations by a carrier certified pursuant to Federal Aviation Regulations Part 121 or Part 135. General Aviation Airports have no regularly scheduled commercial service. Florida's 20 commercial airports rank third nationally in enplaned air passengers, and over half of the State's visitors arrive by air each

year through these airports. Florida's commercial airports enplane almost 6 percent of the nation's annual air cargo tonnage, and air cargo shipments account for over 25 percent of Florida's international trade dollars. Florida's 111 public general aviation airports bring an estimated 9 million travelers to the State each year, house over 6 percent of the nation's general aviation fleet, and rank second in the nation for the number of general aviation operations. Florida's general aviation airports are responsible for almost 80 percent of all aircraft operation that take place in Florida.

In response to a perceived underutilization of general aviation airports and the overutilization of ground transportation the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and state and local aviation development organizations developed the Small Aircraft Transportation System (SATS). NASA's vision is to use some of the underutilized airspace to alleviate the overutilized ground transportation. This would be accomplished through technology that makes flying more user-friendly and competitive with intercity automobile traffic. SATS is an integration of new technologies that includes small airplanes with high-tech, user-friendly cockpits, quiet jet propulsion systems working with integrated airports infrastructure technology to allow precision landings even in inclement weather. This integrated technology requires smaller landing space than conventional airport technology.

SATS technologies target smaller aircraft used for personal and business transportation missions within the infrastructure of smaller airports throughout the nation. These missions include travel by individuals, families, or groups of business associates. Consequently the aircraft are of similar size to typical automobiles and vans used for non-commercial ground transportation (two to eight seats). The SATS technology aboard the aircraft is integrated with the airport technology infrastructure. These airports will not require air traffic control towers and the airspace will not require radar surveillance for air traffic services.

In addition to technologies for the aircraft, SATS strategies are conceived to affect the nature of aviation operational capabilities for airports, airspace, and air traffic and commercial services. The wider SATS vision encompasses inter-modal connectivity between public and private, air and ground modes of travel. In concept, the SATS vision integrates the use of smaller landing facilities with the interstate highway system, intra-city rail transit systems, and hub-and-spoke airports. The strategy focuses on airborne technologies that expand the use of airports with excess capacity as well as underutilized, unmanaged airspace for transportation use.

The SATS Program was initiated in October 2000 with a \$9 million budget appropriated by Congress for fiscal year 2001 and a total budget of \$69 million for five years. A five-year proof of concept research effort is required by Congress. The proof of concept program would culminate in a joint NASA/FAA demonstration of SATS operational capabilities. The five-year program objective is to demonstrate key airborne technologies for precise guidance to virtually any touchdown zone at small airports.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University is leading a consortium of public and private sector stakeholders, known as SATSLab, designed to be Florida's (and the Southeast region's) focal point for communication and implementation of NASA's plan to demonstrate the convenience, affordability, and economic benefits of SATS.

The goals of the SATS program are to:

- Establish the Southeast region and Southeast SATSLab members as “First-to-Market” in this new paradigm of air transportation and personal mobility;
- Show that SATS can move people and goods between Florida communities in half the time compared to current modes safely comfortably, and affordably;
- Select and outfit a network of Southeastern States airports with SATS infrastructure and services;
- Organize a fleet of aircraft equipped with the new “smart” SATS technologies.
- Work with communities and industry to develop seamless doorstep-to-destination connections at the selected airports;
- Integrate SATS capabilities for real travel markets to include: business, government, tourist, personal, and cargo;
- Implement SATS service at ten airports in Florida in 2003 and implement SATS at an additional 10 airports for showcase demonstrations by 2005.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This CS would make Florida a participant along with NASA, the Federal Aviation Administration, the aircraft industry, and various universities in the SATS project.

The CS provides the Legislature expresses its commitment, through participation in SATS, to:

- Improve travel choices, mobility, and accessibility for the citizens of the state;
- Enhance economic growth and competitiveness for the rural and remote communities of the state through improved transportation choices;
- Maintain the state’s leadership and proactive role in aviation and aerospace through active involvement in advancing aviation technology infrastructure and capabilities;
- Take advantage of federal programs that can bring investments in technology, research, and infrastructure capable of enhancing competitiveness and opportunities for industry and workforce development;
- Participate in opportunities that can place the state’s industries and communities in a first-to-market advantage when developing, implementing, and proving new technologies that have the potential to satisfy requirements of the public good;
- Participate as partners with NASA, FAA, the aircraft industry, local governments, and those universities comprising SATSLab to implement a SATS infrastructure as a statewide network of airports to support the commitments in this CS.

The CS appropriates \$3,329,500 from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Department of Transportation to provide funds to be used with federal and industry funds in purchasing the high-technology electronic airport infrastructure used to develop a network of 10 airports statewide for SATS experiments beginning in 2003. The funds will also be used to help establish an operations command center that will be used to coordinate all flying and operational activities undertaken under this CS.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

Indeterminate.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

The CS appropriates \$3,329,500 from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Department of Transportation to provide funds to be used with federal and industry funds in purchasing the high-technology electronic airport infrastructure used to develop a network of 10 airports statewide for SATS experiments beginning in 2003. The funds will also be used to help establish an operations command center that will be used to coordinate all flying and operational activities undertaken under this CS.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.