

The recent story, "HEADLINE," about funding for local airports, unfortunately lacked understanding of private aviation, air traffic system funding or needs of communities and towns nationwide. It simply promoted the airline industries' attempt to privatize the national air transportation network.

The proposal is the aviation equivalent of converting the entire national highway system into toll roads, while also tripling fuel taxes from 19 cents to 70 cents per gallon. It also makes the nation's airlines the dominant members of a committee that decides those tolls. Imagine you, as a private car owner, would suddenly face a 51 cent per gallon increase in the fuel tax plus the establishment of national toll roads – with higher tolls for on and off-ramps at major cities – to primarily benefit the Greyhound bus service.

The national airspace system and the FAA are today jointly funded through fuel taxes paid by owners of private aircraft, taxes paid by airline passengers, and federal budget funds. The vast majority of these funds already support airline operations and hub airports.

The article claims overtaxed airline passengers give private jets a free ride. In fact, private jets are already charged fuel taxes by federal and state governments, and, in most cases, the airports where they purchase fuel. It's similar to how every car owner pays both federal and state fuel taxes to support a highway system.

Local airports are critical for towns, even with little or no airline service. Airports support businesses, emergency medical services, postal services, and fire-fighting teams, among others. Local airports stimulate local economic growth, generating billions of dollars annually and employing more than one million people nationwide.

The national air traffic system costs are the same with or without non-airline aircraft. Raising taxes and creating a new bureaucracy to run toll roads in the sky will cost you more and diminish the freedom of average Americans to fly their own aircraft. It has happened in every other nation that has implemented this system. Imagine if such a system were imposed on your driving.

Do not be fooled. This will not reduce the cost of your airline ticket. It will not bring more efficiency to air travel. It will simply create a new bureaucracy that raises your taxes through "fees." The losers will be average Americans, who will be priced out of the sky, as well as small towns and communities.