



U. S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Great Lakes Region  
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan  
Minnesota, North Dakota,  
Ohio, South Dakota,  
Wisconsin

2300 East Devon Avenue  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018

## **REGIONAL GUIDANCE LETTER—AIRPORTS DIVISION**

**NUMBER:** 5100.30

**DATE:** May 9, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Buy American Requirement in Construction and Equipment Grants

**REFERENCES:** Title 49 United States Code (USC) (“the Act”), Section 50101  
FAA Order 5100.38, “Airport Improvement Program Handbook”  
[http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/aip/aip\\_handbook/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/aip/aip_handbook/)

### **BACKGROUND:**

Section 50101 of the Act prohibits the FAA from obligating funds for a grant under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) unless steel and manufactured goods used in the project are produced in the United States.

This provision was added to the FAA’s authorizing legislation in 1990. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) specifically excluded federal grant programs such as AIP. Therefore, NAFTA does not change a Sponsor’s requirement to comply with the Buy American requirement in the Act.

The FAA may waive the requirement if a sponsor submits a written request demonstrating that one of the following criteria applies:

- Applying the provision is not in the public interest. This is reserved for significant public interest determinations;
- The steel or manufactured good is not available in sufficient quantity or satisfactory quality in the United States;
- For AIP grant-funded projects other than ground transportation demonstration projects,
  - the cost of components and subcomponents produced in the United States is more than 60 percent of the cost of all components of the facility or equipment; and
  - final assembly of the facility or equipment has occurred in the United States; or
- Applying this provision would increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent.

As of the date of this Regional Guidance Letter (RGL), a national Program Guidance Letter (PGL) is under development and pending publication. In order to ensure

compliance for grants issued prior to the PGL's final publication, this RGL is intended to provide interim guidance for all AIP-funded construction and equipment grants.

**INTERIM REGIONAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES:**

All sponsors are reminded that the "Terms and Conditions of Accepting Airport Improvement Program Grants" (dated June 2005) includes a certification in Section II (General Conditions), Subsection J stating that:

Unless otherwise approved by the FAA, it will not acquire or permit any contractor or subcontractor to acquire any steel or manufactured products produced outside the United States to be used for any project for airport development or noise compatibility for which funds are provided under this grant. The sponsor will include in every contract a provision implementing this condition.

As with all required terms and conditions, sponsors are responsible for ensuring that their certifications are complete and accurate. Sponsors are therefore also responsible for determining if they may require a waiver for a particular project. Until the PGL is finalized and published, it shall be the policy of the Great Lakes Region that any sponsor asking the FAA to waive this requirement must do so in writing (see Exhibit A).

Neither the Region nor ADOs are authorized to approve waivers under the first or second criteria above. If the ADO recommends a waiver pursuant to the first or second criteria, they shall forward the request with their recommendation to AGL-610, who will in turn review and relay such requests to APP-500 for adjudication. Sponsors are urged to submit such requests as early as possible, generally providing at least 30 calendar days prior to anticipated grant award.

ADOs and block-grant states are hereby authorized to approve written waiver requests under the third or fourth criteria above. Consistent with other sponsor certifications, the FAA may base its approval entirely on the information provided by the sponsor, without any obligation to conduct independent review, research or verification of the information presented.

The original written request, all supporting documentation and the final waiver must be retained in the grant documentation file or binder.

**FAA CERTIFIED EQUIPMENT:**

All ADOs, sponsors, consultants and contractors are advised and reminded that FAA certification of equipment for a particular purpose does not necessarily mean that the equipment satisfies the Buy American requirement. The FAA certifies equipment for technical and functional specifications, without regard to how the equipment is funded. When equipment is funded with AIP grants, a number of additional legal and administrative requirements apply, including the Buy American provision.

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Jeri Alles  
Airports Division Manager  
Great Lakes Region

**Exhibit A (Request for Waiver of Buy American Requirement)**

**Airport Sponsor** [insert legal name of sponsor]

**Official Representative** [insert name]

**Project Name** [insert]

*Indicate reason(s) for waiver request. Supporting documentation must be provided for each reason indicated.*

- A. Applying the provision is not in the public interest. This is reserved for significant public interest determinations.
- B. The steel or manufactured good is not available in sufficient quantity or satisfactory quality in the United States.
- C. For AIP grant-funded projects other than ground transportation demonstration projects:
  - the cost of components and subcomponents produced in the United States is more than 60 percent of the cost of all components of the facility or equipment; and
  - final assembly of the facility or equipment has occurred in the United States.
- D. Applying this provision would increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent.

**Signature**

*I hereby request a waiver of the Buy American requirements for the reason(s) indicated above. All documentation provided in support of this request is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.*

**Date**

**FAA USE ONLY BELOW THIS LINE**

***Waiver requests based on Criteria A or B above require approval by Headquarters***

**ADO Recommendation**  Recommended  Not recommended

**ADO Manager** [insert name]

**Signature**

**Date** [insert]

**RO Recommendation**  Recommended  Not recommended

**610 Branch Manager** [insert name]

**Signature**

**Date** [insert]

***ADO Manager or block-grant state may approve waivers based on Criteria C or D above***

**Waiver Determination**  Approved  Denied  Further information required

**ADO Manager** [insert]

**Signature**

**Date** [insert]