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Vought urges U.S. funds for Airtrans project

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WASHINGTON — Representatives of Vought Corp. in Dallas urged Tuesday a Senate appropriations subcommittee to approve \$7 million to permit it to conduct a demonstration project involving the Airtrans system operating at Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport.

Authorization for such a research and development program, at a cost of \$7 million, has been approved by a House-Senate conference committee as part of the federal-aid highway act of 1975, which is awaiting action by the House. It was approved by the Senate by voice vote Tuesday.

The authorizing legislation would permit the secretary of transportation to conduct a demonstration project "for design, improvement, modifica-

tion and urban deployment" of Airtrans at the regional airport.

THE PROGRAM proposed by Vought calls for research and development to obtain higher speeds for Airtrans (17 to 35 miles per hour), urban passenger acceptance, reduced capital and operating costs, improved subsystem reliability, all weather operation and greater energy conservation.

During debate on the highway bill last year, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, said "a research and demonstration project involving Airtrans would have great value nationwide."

Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., chairman of the transportation appropriations subcommittee which heard the Vought Corp. testimony Tuesday, told Bentsen such a project could be funded out of research, development and demonstration funds in the appropriation bill.

The \$7 million was not part of the Senate highway bill but was contained in the House bill and the Senate conferees acceded to the House language.

AIRTRANS HAS been plagued by problems, both in operation and funding. It was closed down Sept. 29 in a dispute over money with the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport Board. That matter was resolved Dec. 5 when the system was turned over to the board.

W. R. Condrey, director of ground transportation projects at Vought, told Bayh the system operated "without interruption at 100 per cent availability for 195 days, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, covering 1.7 million miles or 67 times around the world."

"Sixty-seven times around the world, Mr. Chairman, in our view is impressive and Airtrans has demonstrated that automated fixed guideway transit can, in fact, be a viable answer to the public transit needs of today," Condrey said.