Congress authorized the Airfield Pavement Technology Program (APTP) in 1999 to improve airfield pavements by investing in applied concrete pavement research. The program was reauthorized and expanded to include asphalt in 2003. For three years, the program’s funding was split evenly between asphalt and concrete airfield pavement research.

The mission of the program is to study airfield pavements that are high quality, durable, safe, and cost-effective. The APTP has produced 52 reports, ten guides, 11 engineering tools, and two handbooks. The program has been supported by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the asphalt and concrete pavement industries, airport owners, airlines, and manufacturers.

The research funded by the APTP is applied federally and at the state level. For example, APTP research has informed federal and state design and construction specification guidance for airfield pavements. The research produced a best practices guide for airport pavement lighting. As airports are working to meet growing passenger demands, the APTP funded a report providing engineers and airport managers with an unbiased procedure for conducting a pavement life cycle cost analysis and evaluating alternative pavement types during the design process.

The authorization for the APTP lapsed in 2006. However, the 2018 FAA reauthorization bill extended the program for five years with broad bipartisan support. The reauthorized program will continue applied research for asphalt and concrete airfield pavements, implement and deploy completed research, promote the latest airfield pavement technologies to improve safety, extend the life of airfield pavements, improve pavement quality, and reduce costs. The research will continue to focus on both asphalt and concrete, and will be carried out through cooperative agreements with universities and non-profits.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2020 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, the industry supports $6 million in funding for the Airfield Pavement Technology Program equally split between asphalt and concrete research.