



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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May 4, 2006

Mr. Eric Anderson
City Manager
City of Tacoma
747 Market Street
Tacoma, WA 98402

Dear Mr. Anderson:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 408,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots, including nearly 12,000 in the State of Washington. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

Members of our Association have contacted us regarding news stories questioning the future of the Tacoma Narrows (TIW) Airport. The Wednesday, May 3, 2006 edition of "the News Tribune" with the banner "Troubled Narrows Airport might go" indicates your suggestion to Tacoma's Mayor and Council that it is time for the "City of Tacoma to begin thinking about selling or closing the Tacoma Narrows Airport."

AOPA is strongly opposed to any proposal or move to close this important airport. And, to suggest that closing the airport is an option with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is absurd since the FAA includes TIW in its' National Plan for Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), a report to the U.S. Congress detailing the FAA's list of airports the FAA deems critical to the national aviation transportation system.

The value of all airports isn't measured solely by the bottom-line of a financial statement. Airports are economic engines to the local community. In the case of TIW, the State of Washington's 2001 Economic Impact of Washington Airports indicated that Tacoma Narrows Airport's economic impact on Pierce County is more than \$20 million per year.

According to FAA records, there are nearly 200 aircraft based at Tacoma Narrows Airport and the airport has over 162,000 operations each year. Not only is this important general aviation airport a key component of the national system, it is also a vital part of the Washington State Aviation System Plan.

Since 1984, TIW has been the recipient of just over \$10 million in federal airport development funding through the FAA. Nearly \$8 million of that total has been provided to the airport since 2004. When an airport sponsor accepts federal airport development funding under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), the sponsor enters into contract

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with the federal government. This contract contains a series of "promises" called Grant Assurances. The Grant Assurances require the airport sponsor to operate the airport, as an airport, for 20 years from the date of the last grant. In the case of TIW, that date would be 2025. These assurances are codified in federal law.

To suggest that the FAA would be "reluctant" to allow an airport to close is probably an understatement, especially one as significant as Tacoma Narrows.

We urge the city leadership to explore alternatives to closure that will ensure the sustained value and role TIW plays in the local community and state and national transportation system.

Should you wish to discuss this matter, please contact me at 301-695-2205 or by e-mail at bill.dunn@aopa.org.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airports

cc: John Sibold, Director, Washington Aviation Division
Wade Bryant, Manager, FAA SEA 630
Mike Ferguson, AOPA Northwest Regional Representative
Mayor, City of Tacoma
City Council, City of Tacoma