



421 Aviation Way
Frederick, Maryland 21701

T. 301-695-2000
F. 301-695-2375

www.aopa.org

October 16, 2013

The Honorable Lewis S. Rosen, Mayor
Mr. Michael Kovacs, City Manager
City of Galveston
P.O. Box 779
823 Rosenberg
Galveston, Texas 77553

Gentlemen:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization of nearly 400,000 pilots, 28,368 of whom live in Texas. AOPA's mission is to effectively serve the interests and needs of its members as aircraft owners and pilots and establish, maintain, and articulate positions of leadership to promote the economy, safety, utility, and popularity of flight in general aviation aircraft. Representing two thirds of all pilots in the United States, AOPA is the largest civil aviation organization in the world. 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.

It is our understanding that the City of Galveston is entertaining the possibility of allowing a non-aeronautical use of part of the Scholes International Airport at Galveston (GLS) for a Grand Prix style race. AOPA contends that is not a good or proper use of airport facilities in that it will negatively affect the normal general aviation operations at GLS. The proposal that we reviewed shows the closure of Runway 18/36, as well as the use of taxiways Echo and Delta, and a currently closed runway (7/25) along with a significant amount of ramp space in front of general aviation hangars and the Lone Star Flight Museum. Based aircraft will not be able to leave their hangars to utilize the airport.

We are aware that there are investors waiting in the wings to develop additional hangars on the airport, a necessary part of every airport's growth plans, but that they are waiting to see if the Grand Prix will make those plans moot. The first and best use of an airport is as an airport, not as a racetrack. The Federal Aviation Administration has invested thousands of dollars in this airport and has historically taken a very dim view of non-aeronautical use of aeronautical use property.

Another concern of the Association's is that the erection of infrastructure for the race, even temporary in nature, may create height and obstruction hazards to aircraft operating at the airport. It is extremely important that the safety of flight is not compromised by building galleries and light-stands to gain a better view of the races. The safety of the public must be assured as well, they will be on an active airport ramp and the temptation may be great to look at

The Honorable Lewis S. Rosen, Mayor
Mr. Michael Kovacs, City Manager
October 16, 2013
Page 2

the airport, but they must not be allowed into an area with active aircraft taxiing, landing and taking off. It is imperative that the public not have access into where the helicopters are operating either. GLS enjoys a great reputation for its helicopter operations in support of the Gulf drilling rigs. That has a much more significant and far-reaching economic impact than a single annual event.

It is for the above stated reasons that we urge the City to reconsider holding a Grand Prix on one of their best transportation assets and not to pursue the Grand Prix any further. Thank you for your consideration of our views on this important issue. If we can be of further assistance, please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John L. Collins", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy

cc:

Mr. Hud Hopkins, Airport Manager, GLS
Mr. David Fulton, Director, Aviation Division, Texas Department of Transportation
Mr. Kelvin Solco, Division Manager, FAA Southwest Regional Airports Branch
Ms. Yasmina Platt, AOPA Central Southwest Regional Manager
Mr. George Gould, AOPA Airport Support Network Volunteer, GLS