



## AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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October 7, 2005

Mr. Dan Stahl  
Executive Director  
Port of Anacortes  
P.O. Box 297  
Anacortes, WA 98221

Dear Mr. Stahl:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of more than 406,000 members, over two-thirds of the nation's pilots, with nearly 12,000 members 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.

The Anacortes Airport (74S) is an integral and vital part of the nation's air transportation infrastructure as well as the eleventh busiest commercial airport in the State of Washington. Additionally, the Port of Anacortes, through marketing information, indicates the airport is "now recognized as one of the finest airports in the Pacific Northwest."<sup>1</sup> With such a positive perspective on your airport, it seems inappropriate to even entertain any consideration to close this important airport.

So, it should be no surprise that we were shocked and appalled to read comments attributed to several Port of Anacortes Commissioners as reported in the October 5, 2005 edition of the "*Anacortes American*" critical of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) September 27, 2005 letter opposing closure of the airport.

To suggest that ".... the FAA may be acting illegally by advocating a position on a local matter" and ".... the FAA is influencing the vote by intimidation" is ludicrous and absurd! The FAA has been directed by the U.S. Congress and federal statute to protect the federal investment in airports that have received federal funding. Anacortes Airport clearly fits into this category.

As you must know, when a public airport sponsor such as the Port accepts federal funds under the FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP), the sponsor enters into a legally binding contract with the federal government.<sup>2</sup> That contract requires the airport sponsor to maintain and operate the airport for a period of 20-years from the date of the AIP grant. Therefore, any ballot measure put forth contemplating airport closure, binding or

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<sup>1</sup> Port of Anacortes Web site [www.portofanacortes.com/airport.html](http://www.portofanacortes.com/airport.html)

<sup>2</sup> 49 USC §47107 Project grant application approval conditioned on assurances about airport operations and 49 USC §47108 Project grant agreements

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not, in addition to being an unnecessary waste of scarce airport and taxpayer funds, conflicts directly with the contract the Port has with the federal government. The Port accepted these federal funds voluntarily – they were not forced on the Port.

Commissioner Niver is quoted in the same newspaper article as saying that it is “My job to represent the public, and I can’t do that if I don’t know what they want.” If that is truly the case, why then doesn’t the proposed ballot measure also seek to determine the public opinion on how the public feels about the marina or the port facility? Should either of these facilities be closed, too? Only then will the Port know what the public really wants in local facilities. Perhaps more importantly, does the Port send every major decision to the general electorate?

The FAA had the legal right to go on record opposing any discussion of closing the Port of Anacortes Airport. The FAA did take the correct action and they did not require pressure from local airport tenants or users to be so motivated. It is the FAA’s responsibility and duty to finance, improve and ensure the country has a balanced and efficient national system of airports.

Your local Chamber of Commerce clearly recognizes the value of the airport as does the federal government and millions of aviation users. We hope the Port Commissioners, as stewards of this community asset, will as well.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn  
Vice President  
Airports

cc: Commissioner Steve Hopley  
Commissioner Chuck Mallary  
Commissioner Ray Niver  
Commissioner Brian Wetcher  
Commissioner Bill Short  
Mr. Wade Bryant, Manager, FAA Seattle Airports District Office  
Mr. John Sibold, Director, Aviation Division, WA Department of Transportation