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March 8, 2012

The Honorable Ron Housh
Mayor, City of Hay Springs
PO Box B
Hay Springs, NE 69347

Dear Mayor Housh:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit membership association representing the general aviation interests of 2,631 pilots and aircraft owners in Nebraska and more than 400,000 nationwide. 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.

We are aware that the Hay Springs City Council recently voted to hold a public hearing to receive input on closing the Hay Springs Municipal Airport. On behalf of our members who use the airport, we urge the Council not to close it. It may not have the commercial service that Scottsbluff or Grand Island has, but the airport still plays a vital role in the City's and State's transportation infrastructure. It is one of twelve public use airports in Nebraska with a turf runway. Flight instructors, student pilots and certificated pilots alike seek out grass airports like Hay Springs to practice their takeoff and landing skills from an unpaved runway surface. Many pilots never even experience the pleasure using a grass runway provides because there is not one available near them.

Hay Springs Municipal Airport serves a vital role in providing services to visitors and families coming to visit relatives and loved ones. Businesses can take advantage of the airport by flying directly to their operations instead of into a "nearby" commercial service airport and renting a car to drive to Hay Springs. Hunters use the airport to arrive closer to their favorite hunting grounds. Through the efforts of your local Experimental Aviation Association chapter, 42 youth received an up close and personal look at general aviation through a Young Eagles Flight. Some of them may even go on to earn a pilot's certificate or pursue a career in aviation.

Additionally, the airport serves as Hay Springs' portal to the National Air Transportation System, the on-ramp to the highways in the skies. From your small airport, an aircraft can go much farther than you can imagine. As we like to say a mile of road only gets you a mile, but a mile (or half mile in your case) of runway can get you the world.

We recognize that running a municipal airport in the current economy is tough and that there may not appear to be a good return on investment. However, AOPA believes that just as there

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may not be visible ROI on your local roads, you would not cut funding to them but you would continue to maintain and retain that valuable transportation infrastructure. We strongly urge you to adopt the same mindset with respect to your airport and continue to keep it open and available. There are several free resources available from the Airport Cooperative Research Program that can help you better manage your airport, everything from developing and leasing airport property to marketing and managing your airport to innovative ways of creating revenue or dealing with wildlife hazards. All of their reports are available as free downloads from their website <http://www.trb.org/ACRP/Public/ACRP.aspx>.

Thank you for considering our views on this important issue. Should you, at any point, require assistance with airport or aviation related policies, please view AOPA and its expertise as a resource for you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Collins", written over a large, faint, light-colored arrow pointing to the left.

John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy