



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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www.aopa.org

March 13, 2007

Honorable Gene Doyle, Mayor
City of Festus
711 West Main
Festus, MO 63028

Dear Mayor Doyle:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), representing 411,000 members nationwide, nearly 7,200 who reside in Missouri, is strongly opposed to this latest initiative to close and sell the Festus Memorial Airport (FES). As a previous resident of the state, I have visited your fine city in past years and used FES to arrive and depart.

We are writing you to urge Council to reject passage of the proposed Bill Number 3693 that would authorize the closure of the only public-use airport in Jefferson County, Missouri. It is our belief that there are additional alternatives to closure and sale of this important airport that have yet to be explored. One alternative may well include a partnership between the county and the city in operation of the airport.

For the past several years, operation of the airport has been undertaken by a dedicated group of local individuals – Citizens for Airport Economic Expansion (CAEE). In collaboration with the Missouri Department of Transportation, a study was conducted that identified how the airport could be improved to add additional value to the community. Those findings have not yet been implemented.

According to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) records for Festus Memorial Airport, nearly 2/3's of the annual operations at your airport are "itinerant" operations. That equates to visitors who are spending their money in your town. Additionally, RIMS-II, an economic impact model developed by the United States Department of Commerce, indicates that for every dollar spent on the airport, visitors to the airport spend \$2.53 off the airport in the local community. This impact translates to employment opportunities and tax benefits which accrue to your city, benefits that can't easily be measured in numbers on a financial statement. That money and the ability to attract it will be gone if the airport is closed.

AOPA strongly urges the City Council to reject proposed ordinance Bill Number 3693 and allow the airport to be all that it can be as a valuable contributor to the local economy.

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A mile of highway only takes you a mile, but a mile of runway takes you to the world. I am certain you wouldn't consider closing a highway exit ramp into your city. An airport is a local city's entry point to an interstate highway system – but in the air.

Thank you for your consideration of the Association's views on this important subject. We truly hope you and the Council will recognize that Festus Memorial Airport is a diamond in the rough that can indeed be polished over time to be the shining gem of your community.

AOPA and our staff stand ready and willing to assist the city in developing creative alternatives that will ensure the continued operation of Festus Memorial Airport.

If we can be of further assistance please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Dunn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airports

cc:

Councilman James Muellersman
Councilman Mr. William Cook
Councilman George Vogt
Councilman Mark Potratz
Councilman Kevin Dennis
Councilman Bobbie Venz
Councilman Terry Nicholson
Councilwoman Judy Williams

Mr. Joe Pestka, Administrator of Aviation
Missouri Department of Transportation

Mr. George Henson, Manager
FAA Central Region Airports Division, ACE-600