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February 5, 2008

Honorable Peter McHugh
Chairman
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
70 West Hedding
San Jose, CA. 95110

Dear Pete:

Let me congratulate you on assuming your most recent leadership role as Chairman of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. With the struggles of many local government bodies, including Santa Clara County, to achieve and maintain financial sustainability, there is no doubt that your work is cut out for you.

While it's been some time since you and I have seen each other, I've continued to follow the politics of Santa Clara County and San Jose. Much has changed since that time. Membership in the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) has grown to over 414,000 members nationwide with over 50,000 who call California their home.

You have truly been a strong supporter of general aviation over the years so I am sure you can imagine my complete surprise and shock when last week's State of the County Address included a renewed call to study closing Reid Hillview Airport (RHV). Converting the airport, part of a vital aviation infrastructure, to something other than an airport, would further feed the county general fund with additional revenue to off-set the budget shortfalls.

AOPA is strongly opposed to renewing discussions to close this important East San Jose reliever airport. As I am certain you know, efforts to close RHV were attempted in the 80's and 90's each time being defeated. The county, having accepted significant amounts of federal Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), entered into a contractual obligation that requires the county to operate the airport for a minimum of 20 years from the date of the last grant. RHV is within this time period and thus must remain open. In our recent discussions with the FAA concerning this latest threat to the airport, we are told just this week that the agency will not allow RHV to close and will take any and all action necessary to ensure the airport continues to operate and remain open. You should expect to hear from the FAA shortly on this matter as well.

Additionally, any cost of a proposed study would be borne totally by the county general fund since use of airport generated revenue to fund a study to close a publicly-funded airport would be a violation of federal law relating to diversion of airport revenue. Significant civil penalties could apply to diversion of airport revenue as well.

There are far greater impacts to aviation in Santa Clara County that must be taken into consideration beyond just possibly closing Reid Hillview Airport. RHV is a self-sufficient airport. It actually generates surplus revenue that is used to offset the operational costs experienced by the county for South County Airport as well as Palo Alto Airport. In the grand scheme of the aviation infrastructure in the county, closing RHV would have a tremendous negative impact on not only the other two county airports but also on San Jose International

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Airport (SJC). Even if the county chooses to allow the current lease with the City of Palo Alto to operate Palo Alto Airport to lapse and not be renewed, RHV revenue would still be necessary to offset South County expenditures. And, none of this takes into consideration the \$15-20 million dollars in positive economic impact generated in the local community as the direct result of RHV airport.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on at least two previous attempts, which failed, to close Reid Hillview Airport. Opponents of the airport have claimed the airport is unsafe only to have those claims rebuked with yet more costly studies funded from the General Fund.

Pete, this is an exercise in futility! And, it will be a costly one as well with consultants' fees, studies and even possible litigation in federal court. I urge you to abandon this ill-conceived idea that we truly believe is doomed from the start.

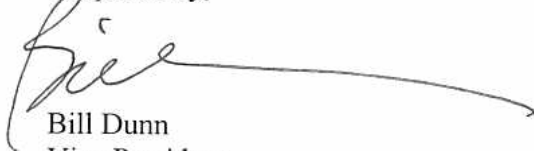
RHV is a critical part of the state and national aviation transportation infrastructure much like the interstate highway system. I can't believe a city or county would consider for even one moment closing down an exit ramp from Highway 101 or Highway 680. RHV serves the same purpose; it is an exit ramp from the interstate system of the sky.

In closing, you should be aware that AOPA is holding our annual exposition, EXPO 2008, in San Jose later this year. The event brings over 10,000 of our members to town for the week. Additionally, the event generates millions of dollars for the local economy. We've already had discussion with the Convention and visitors Bureau to express our dissatisfaction with the suggestion to close Reid Hillview – which is one of the airports we intend to have members fly to during the weeklong event. We will certainly raise the public awareness of the situation and issue as the event draws closer and spotlight the county actions with our members and the local community during the event.

Again, we are asking that the county abandon any further thought of studying or seeking to close Reid Hillview airport. Not doing so will surely cost the county hundreds of thousands of dollars or more and end unsuccessfully as did past efforts to close the airport.

Should you wish to discuss this matter, please feel free to call me at 301-695-2205.

Respectfully,



Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airports

cc:
Kirk Shaffer, Associate Administrator for Airports, FAA