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June 5, 2009

Mr. Christopher Brady
City Manager
City of Mesa
PO Box 1466
Mesa, AZ 85211

Dear Mr. Brady:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 416,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots – including more than 1,347 members in the City of Mesa and over 9,400 members in Maricopa County. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the viability and safety of community airports and their facilities as part of a statewide and national air transportation system.

AOPA and the local aviation community share an important goal with the City of Mesa and Maricopa County - to ensure safety is a top priority for everyone utilizing the Falcon Field Airport (FFZ). To that end, we understand the City of Mesa, local residents and pilots have embarked on a number of local initiatives including the establishment of an ad hoc committee for the airport. Our understanding is that the goal of the committee is to assist the City of Mesa in defining a vision and business plan for Falcon Field that ensures "fly friendly" policies and procedures are implemented to address community concerns, and while continuing to promote and protect the important role Falcon Field plays in the local economy. We encourage you to remain committed to this effort.

As part of an ongoing collaborative effort, the airport has already implemented a number of changes such as monitoring noise complaints to understand the specific areas in the community where noise is a larger concern, raising the pattern altitude by 200 feet, negotiating voluntary agreements with local flight school operators, and working with FAA Air Traffic Control to vary flight patterns and procedures that help reduce noise footprints in the vicinity of the airport. These are tools that have proven effective across the country and support the airport's mission to provide a safe, efficient operating environment for pilots and their aircraft.

We are aware that additional measures such as limiting flight training activities and night operations are also under consideration. Since the level of aviation experience and knowledge among the ad hoc members varies greatly, not all members of the task force will understand the impacts of the City's signed agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration. In addition to addressing the needs of the surrounding community and

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the airport users, it will be incumbent upon the City of Mesa to assure that any changes in airport procedures, rules, or standards do not jeopardize the City's ability to honor those commitments, and ensure that pilots are not restricted from complying with Federal laws requiring recurrent training and operational experience.

AOPA is also aware that the City may consider landing fees as an additional source of revenue for the airport. We would discourage the implementation of any landing fee structure and would encourage the City to explore other sources of revenue that could provide funding without adding additional financial burden on based pilots. In any event, such a decision should be considered thoroughly and on its own merits rather than as part of the current discussion.

If the City decides to create airport governing documents, such as minimum standards for commercial activities or airport rules and regulations, AOPA would suggest that the task force or similar group of airport users be consulted during the drafting process. Allowing early opportunity for input and collaboration with affected parties will add great value to the final documents and assist with the smooth implementation of any proposed changes the airport plans to adopt.

AOPA Members Share the Goal of Ensuring Safety is Top Priority

AOPA and its more than 1,300 members that live in the City of Mesa, share the goal of making safety their top priority. In addition, we place a strong emphasis on ensuring the local community understands the value of the airport, the economic impact the airport has on the surrounding community and the importance of providing a "fly friendly" environment to ensure positive community relations.

Falcon Field Contributes to the Economy

General Aviation is an integral part of the U.S. economy, supporting more than a million jobs and more than \$150 billion in total economic activity. General aviation in the state of Arizona generates nearly 1.5 billion dollars in economic impact for the state including nearly \$242 million generated by flight training and aviation education. Aviation also pays its way in tax revenues for the state which in great part goes back into the state and local economy. Of the more than one half billion collected in taxes attributed to aviation, over 97% or \$564 million goes directly back to the general fund of the state or local government for education and public services. I'm sure the City and residents of Mesa would agree that Falcon Field and the businesses on the airport contribute significantly to the local economy. Based upon its contribution to the community, it is imperative that the City of Mesa protect its investment in the airport.

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AOPA appreciates the opportunity to share our perspective and supports the City of Mesa in efforts to address the needs of the surrounding community and airport users while ensuring they protect the economic and transportation asset they have in Falcon Field.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi J Williams", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Heidi J Williams
Senior Director, Airports