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June 17, 2009

Mr. Tom Schmid
Project Manager
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
P.O. Box 196900, MS-2525
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900

Dear Mr. Schmid:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit membership organization that represents the general aviation interests of over 415,000 members nationwide – including more than 4,400 members in Alaska. Since 1939, AOPA has been committed to ensuring the safety, future viability, and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as a part of the national transportation system.

We are writing to express our support for proposed improvements to Talkeetna Airport that include additional lease lots, additional transient parking, fencing, pedestrian paths, and tree removal.

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to visit Talkeetna and saw first hand the vital role the airport plays in the local economy, serving as an air operations base and a tourist destination for visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve and Mt. McKinley. Maintenance and improvement of this important piece of Alaska's aviation infrastructure will enhance safety at the airport and will help ensure the airport complies with design standards in accordance with the Federal Aviation Administration.

AOPA strongly encourages the State to place a high priority on compatible land use planning around the airport to adequately provide for the health, welfare and safety of its citizens both on the ground and in the air. Therefore, we urge the Department to work with local planning authorities in developing a land use plan for properties adjacent to Talkeetna Airport.

AOPA appreciates the opportunity to share our perspective and supports the state's efforts to address the needs of airport users and the surrounding community while working to protect and enhance the economic and transportation asset they have in Talkeetna Airport. Thank you for your careful consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Greg Pecoraro
Vice President, Airports and State Advocacy