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March 1, 2010

The Honorable Gene Wagner
Port of Kennewick Commission
350 Clover Island Drive
Kennewick, WA 99336

Dear Commissioner Wagner:

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 12,321 of our members in the state of Washington. 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.

Vista Field is one important piece of that system. Like many of our nation's airports, Vista Field traces its history back to World War II when it served as an outlying field for Pasco Naval Air Station now Tri-Cities Airport. Coming back to civilian use, it serves as the aerial front door for Kennewick and the communities on the south side of the Columbia River. AOPA strongly supports the continued operation of Vista Field and asks that the Port Commission vote to keep it open on March 8th.

Every airport in the United States, even those not specifically included in the Federal Aviation Administration's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), serve a vital and specific purpose. These purposes are stated in various ways by the different states. In Washington, Vista Field is considered a Community Service airport. Per the 2009 Washington State Aviation System Plan: "The Community Service Airports serve medium-sized communities and accommodates a wide range of general aviation aircraft including VLJs. General aviation activities accommodated include agricultural support, business support, and emergency medical transportation and are important to the community's economic well-being and quality of life."

There are 22 Community Service airports in Washington. Nationally, there are hundreds more airports like Vista Field bringing the same services and activities to their communities. Linked together via general aviation aircraft these airports form a large, vital, and vibrant transportation network.

Within the broad descriptions certain roles emerge. For some airports it is as a recreational outlet, allowing pilots and their families and friends access to travel destinations not reached by the airlines. Other airports serve as an educational center introducing people to the wonders of flight and training the next generation of private, corporate and airline pilots. Still, more airports serve the needs of business and industry providing quick local access to businesses, factories,

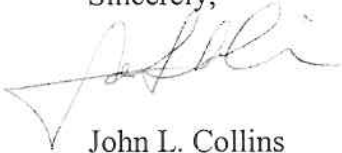
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warehouses, and plants crucial to our national economy. Emergency services, law enforcement, aerial firefighting, search and rescue, and patient evacuation are key roles at many airports and in times of natural or national disaster serve as vital entry points for supplies, medical help and relief efforts. Many airports serve in several of these roles concurrently multiplying their benefits to the local communities they serve.

We are aware that the Port is voting on the future of Vista Field. AOPA strongly encourages the Port Commission to vote yes to keeping the airport open and further developing its role for the City of Kennewick and the surrounding communities.

Thank you for considering our views on this vital and important airport. If we can be of further assistance please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,



John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy

cc:

Commissioner Skip Novakovich, Vice President Port of Kennewick
Commissioner Dave Hanson, Secretary Port of Kennewick
Tim Arntzen, Executive Director Port of Kennewick
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