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July 3, 2012

Rick Armstrong, Chairman  
Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission  
120 N Robinson Ave, Suite 1244 W  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization of 400,000 pilots and aircraft owners, including 5,052 in the State of Oklahoma. On behalf of its members, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future safety, viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a local, state, and national transportation system.

It is with concern that we note the proposal before the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) to remove four general aviation airports from the Oklahoma Aviation System Plan (OASP). It is the Association's considered opinion that the airports in question, Westport Airport, Tenkiller Lake Airpark, Lake Murray State Park Airport, and Pawnee Airport can and should continue to play a valuable role in the OASP as they are of interest to our members who utilize them.

As a general principal, and expected by our membership, AOPA cannot condone actions taken against general aviation airports that directly or indirectly result in their ultimate demise and closure. Despite assurances from the OAC staff that the removal from the OASP will not mean closure for the airport, it sets them on a path that will likely result in their eventual closure. To that extent, we would offer these comments on the OAC staff recommendations

AOPA appreciates the safety concerns raised by OAC staff on the distance of the rodeo arena to the runway centerline at the Pawnee airport, but believes the concern is overstated. Based on aerial photography and the online measuring tools available to us, it appears that the distance from the runway centerline to the westernmost building is 212 feet, not 75 feet, well outside of the runway safety area.

Both Westport Airport and Tenkiller Lake Airpark have more than the minimum number of based aircraft required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for inclusion in their National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. These airports also have interested airport sponsors who try hard to keep the airports maintained. There is demand and usage, key ingredients in keeping airports alive and thriving.

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As noted by the OAC staff, Lake Murray State Park has a federal obligation and cannot close unless the sponsor petitions the FAA and they approve the closure. Candidly, the airport sponsor needs to do a better job of promoting their airport and enticing transient traffic. They should also consider looking at allowing tenancy at the airport.

AOPA's Airports team has great respect for the dedication and professionalism of the OAC staff. We have reviewed the criteria outlined in the OASP and the concerns raised by OAC staff, and understand the reasoning behind their recommendations. Even so, we cannot agree with the recommendation, and believe that all four airports should remain a part of the OASP.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue. If we can be of any further assistance in this matter please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Pecoraro', written in a cursive style.

Gregory Pecoraro  
Vice President  
Airports and State Advocacy

cc:

Victor Bird, Esq. Director, Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission  
Vivek Khanna, PhD., P.E., M.ASCE, Airports Engineer, Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission