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May 27, 2010

Mr. William Sherry  
Director of Aviation  
City of San Jose  
1732 North First Street  
Suite 600  
San Jose, CA 95112

Dear Mr. Sherry:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 415,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots, including nearly 50,000 members in the State of California. AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and economic development of general aviation facilities at airports without regard for aircraft size or type. General aviation is a vital part of a state and national transportation system and should be treated in a fair and equitable manner at all public use airports. Today, we write in regard to general aviation activity at Norman Y. Mineta International Airport (SJC).

The current effort to update the Airport Master Plan provides an excellent opportunity to revisit general aviation demand for facilities and services at SJC. On behalf of our members, AOPA believes that light single-engine and twin-engine piston aircraft as well as light turbo-prop aircraft demand should be included in this project.

For decades, the administration of Norman Y. Mineta International Airport (SJC) seems to have worked aggressively to rid the airport of light general aviation aircraft; focusing instead on high-end corporate "business" jet aircraft. But it is important to remember that business use of general aviation aircraft extends to all categories and types of aircraft, not just jets and not just the "wealthy." We urge you to change the direction of this exclusionary policy that has discouraged light general aviation piston and turbine aircraft from basing at SJC and accommodate those aircraft owners who wish to base at the airport.

Since 1995, the airport has not accepted any new tenants in city owned hangars and tie-down facilities. Renting these facilities, even on a short term basis could be generating revenue for the airport but have remained empty even though there has been demand by aircraft owners for those facilities.

We also suggest that the methodology of allocating expenses to airport operations from existing general aviation tenants should be reviewed and updated to more accurately reflect the actual cost of providing services to general aviation operators. We have heard from members that the allocation model has not been updated since 1992. If that is indeed the case, much has changed both at the airport and within the local economy.

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It is our understanding that City of San Jose Municipal Code requires the airport to report regularly to the City Council on the demand for general aviation facilities at SJC. We have received information from several of our local members, who have made requests to the City Clerk for this report, that no record of such reports can be located. If such reports exist, we would appreciate it if you would please forward a copy of the latest report to my office at your earliest opportunity. If this report does not exist, we encourage you to begin providing this information immediately so that the City Council and general public can make well-informed decisions about the airport.

Parenthetically, I note that AOPA has in the past been pleased to have San Jose as one of the sites we select for our annual Conference and Exposition. As we look to the future, return visits to San Jose are far more likely when we know that the community and its airports are "GA Friendly", and that our primary constituency, piston aircraft owners and operators, are able to report that they are being treated fairly and equitably at an airport receiving millions of dollars in federal development funds.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We hope this project will be approached with an open mind to a shift in providing facilities for light aircraft who wish to base aircraft at SJC.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Dunn", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bill Dunn  
Vice President  
Airport Advocacy

cc: Honorable Chuck Reed, Mayor  
Ms. Debra Figone, City Manager  
Ms. Pat Dando, President & CEO  
San Jose Chamber of Commerce  
Daniel Fenton, CEO  
San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau