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April 16, 2012

The Honorable Steve Abercrombie
City of Tracy
333 Civic Center Plaza
Tracy, CA 95376

Dear Councilman Abercrombie:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization of almost 400,000 pilots. AOPA's mission is to effectively serve the interests and needs of its members as aircraft owners and pilots and establish, maintain, and articulate positions of leadership to promote the economy, safety, utility, and popularity of flight in general aviation aircraft. Representing two thirds of all pilots in the United States, AOPA is the largest civil aviation organization in the world. 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.

We understand that the City underwent a runway overlay project at the Tracy Municipal Airport several years ago that was not done properly resulting in spalling of the pavement. Some of these pieces of spalling can present a hazard to general aviation aircraft operating on the ramps, runways and taxiways. We are aware that the City is currently taking steps to correct that and hope you complete the project on schedule. Unfortunately, as part of that overlay project the runways appear to be shorter in length leading to a reclassification under the State of California's Airport Land Use Planning Handbook from medium size general aviation runways of 4,002 and 4,005 feet to short general aviation runways of less than 4,000' each. While this may seem to be an insignificant change, there are some consequences we feel the City needs to be aware of.

Most importantly, changing the runway lengths does not change the type or size of the aircraft utilizing the airport. You will still have the same general aviation aircraft at Tracy. Aircraft will still utilize the same traffic patterns in normal operations. What does change is the size of the safety zones around the airport. Because the runways are now shorter than 4,000 feet, the safety zones do not extend as far as they did when the runways were 6 feet longer under the CalTrans' *California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook*. On paper this may look good to some residents who will not be under the overlay, but in reality it offers less protection to the citizens on the ground and in the air and can in some cases may allow for closer incompatible land uses. AOPA strongly recommends keeping the runways at the 4,002 and 4,005 foot lengths and utilizing the larger safety zones to better protect and ensure the health, welfare and continued prosperity of Tracy's citizens.

AOPA urges the City to work with the Tracy Airport Association, the Federal Aviation Administration and the CalTrans Division of Aeronautics to ensure better compatibility between the airport and the community.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue. We stand ready to assist in any way we can with this process.

Sincerely,

John L. Collins
Manager, Airport Policy