



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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February 26, 2004

Mr. Jim Shaw, Chairman
Washoe County Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 11130
Reno, NV 89520

Dear Chairman Shaw:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a non-profit membership organization with a membership of over 400,000 pilots and aircraft owners nationwide, 4,200 of whom reside in Nevada. The Association is committed to ensuring the continued viability, growth, and development of general aviation and airports in Nevada and the United States.

We understand the County is now considering new residential development which we believe to be dangerously close to the Spanish Springs Airport (N86); and, in fact, may be located within the runway protection zone of the airport's Runway 34. AOPA must advise you of our serious concerns with the proposed development, and strongly urge you to reconsider your plans due to the potential safety, operational and legal issues surrounding the proposal.

Incompatible land use around airports is a major challenge facing aviation today and threatens the usefulness of many airports in this country. Our experience in dealing with over 5,000 publicly owned airports throughout the U.S. demonstrates that communities -- often unknowingly -- create problems for themselves and future generations by failing to follow common sense airport compatible land use policies. Communities that promote incompatible land uses adjacent to the airport may be inviting serious problems related to noise and safety down the road. However, these potential problems can be mitigated, if not eliminated, with responsible land use planning.

Research shows that many accidents occur around airports. This is natural as two of the most challenging aeronautical events occur on and in the vicinity of airports -- takeoffs and landings. Sensible land use planning accounts for this reality, as does the State of Nevada (Section 497.010, Title 44 Aeronautics, Zoning of the Nevada Revised Statutes). These provisions were adopted in 1947 to protect the State's citizens from airport hazards. Your State exercised great prudence and forethought in addressing this issue a half-century ago when aviation was still in its infancy and Nevada was a much less densely populated place than it is today. Clearly, incompatible land use poses a far greater risk in Washoe County today than it did in 1947.

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In addition to safety concerns, normal airport operations sometimes raise a range of other issues with some citizens located adjacent to an airport. There are airports that have become surrounded by residential developments – oftentimes *because of being convenient to the airport*. Yet, some of those same residents who chose to move next to the airport seek redress from local government because of normal aircraft operations over or near their property. Developers build, sell and profit from new developments and then move on -- leaving local government to deal with the complaints concerning the airport that arise from the new residents.

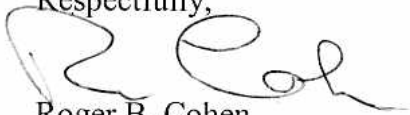
The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) offers guidance to airport sponsors and surrounding communities to promote compatible land use that will enhance the airport's continued safe operation and viability. The following guidance concerning compatible land use within the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) is from FAA Advisory Circular 150/5100-13, "Airport Design:"

“The RPZ’s function is to enhance the protection of people and property on the ground,” paragraph 212. Further in paragraph 212(2)(b)... “Land uses prohibited from the RPZ are residences and places of public assembly. (Churches, schools, hospitals, office buildings, shopping centers, and other uses with similar concentrations of persons typify places of public assembly.)”

The Association strongly urges the County to take all possible measures, including enforcement of existing state and local statutes, to prevent further residential encroachment of Spanish Springs Airport. By doing so, you will be protecting the health, safety, and welfare of your citizens both on the ground and in the air.

We appreciate your taking the Association’s views into consideration. We will be following up with you soon and look forward to working with you to the benefit of Washoe County.

Respectfully,



Roger B. Cohen
Vice President
Regional Affairs

cc:

Mr. Kent Cooper, Assistant Director, Planning, NVDOT
Mr. Dennis Taylor, Statewide Aviation Coordinator, NVDOT
Mr. Andy Richards, Manager, FAA San Francisco Airports District Office
Mrs. Stacy Howard, AOPA Western Region Representative
Mr. Max Bartmess, AOPA Airport Support Network Volunteer N86