



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Office of the Associate
Administrator for Airports

800 Independence Ave., SW.
Washington, DC 20581

APR 10 2002

Mr. Richard Mussett
City Development Administrator
City of St. Petersburg
P.O. Box 2842
St. Petersburg, FL 33731

Dear Mr. Mussett:

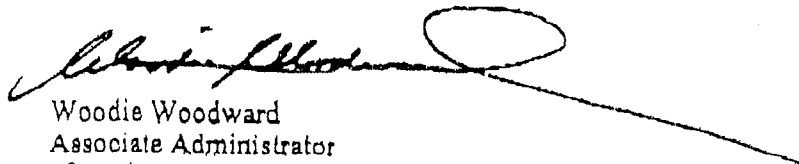
Congressman C.W. Bill Young has asked the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to respond to your letter of March 6 regarding the city of St. Petersburg's (city) Federal obligations regarding its operation of Albert Whitted Airport in St. Petersburg, Florida.

In your letter, you state that you understand that the FAA may release a local government from its Airport Improvement Program (AIP) assurances based on repayment of unamortized FAA grant funds and other conditions of approval. In fact, Federal legislation does not specifically provide for the release of a sponsor's obligations upon simple repayment of those grants. The city is obligated to operate the airport throughout the term of the city's obligation. In this case, it appears that obligation extends through the useful life of the improvements, not to exceed 20 years from the date of the most recent grant.

The FAA has only rarely considered applications for release of all sponsor obligations sufficient to allow for the closure of the airport, and then only in unusual circumstances. The FAA has granted a release of an entire airport only if the closure itself could be considered to benefit the civil aviation interests of the public. These releases have, among other things, required the expenditure of funds by the sponsor on aeronautical projects that benefit the public's interest in civil aviation, often including the construction of a replacement airport. Because of the important role Albert Whitted plays in the national airport system, the city may find it difficult to show any aviation benefit from the closure of the airport while it remains obligated under AIP grant assurances.

If the city requires more information on planning for the future of the airport, please contact the Orlando Airports District Office. That office can provide you with information. You may contact W. Dean Stringer at the Orlando Airports District Office at (407) 812-6331.

Sincerely,



Woodie Woodward
Associate Administrator
for Airports

cc: Congressman C.W. Bill Young