



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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April 12, 2006

Honorable Steve Murphy
Chairman
Senate Transportation Committee
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Room 306
St. Paul, MN

Re: SF 3753 (Crystal Airport economic analysis and alternative land use report)

Dear Chairman Murphy:

On behalf of the more than 7,600 Minnesota members – of 408,000 members nationwide – of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), we are writing to express our strong opposition to Senate File (SF) 3753, which directs the Metropolitan Council to submit a report to the Legislature including an economic analysis of Crystal Airport and suggestions for potential alternative uses for the Crystal Airport property. This bill is duplicative of research and studies already completed. We have already written to House Transportation Finance Committee Chairwoman Holberg, in opposition to companion bill House File 4102.

In January 2006, the Reliever Airports Task Force of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) released its *Recommendations Regarding the Future Operation and Development of the Reliever Airport System*. Included in the *Recommendations* was an economic analysis, conducted by Wilder Research - an independent research organization - of all MAC operated General Aviation Reliever Airports including Crystal Airport. The final report contained a number of recommendations for these vital transportation facilities including an overall recommendation that “the MAC’s airports remain in their existing locations and that each be developed to meet its specific purpose.” This includes Crystal Airport.

Moreover, MAC has accepted Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants for development projects at Crystal Airport. As a condition of receiving federal funds for airport development, the federal government requires the airport sponsor (MAC) to operate the airport as an airport for a period of 20 years from the date of the last grant. Since the last FAA grant was accepted in 2004, Crystal Airport through MAC is obligated to the federal government until at least 2024.

Given the redundancy of a second economic analysis and the futility of studying alternative uses for airport property that is required by federal law to continue to operate as an airport for the foreseeable future, we respectfully urge your committee’s “no” vote on SF 3753.

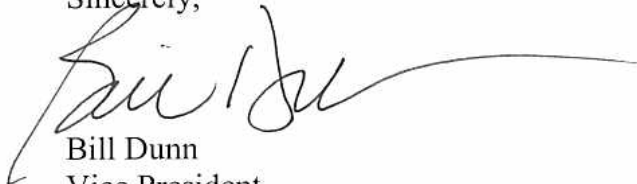
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We are disappointed that there continue to be efforts by some to close this important and vital general aviation airport. At the end of 2004, officials in Hennepin County convinced the Senate to hold hearings on "The Future of Crystal Airport." In November 2004, I personally appeared and testified before the Senate Aviation Subcommittee chaired by Senator Ann Rest. Senator Rest's Committee received testimony from individuals, government officials and businesses on both sides of the issue. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Senator indicated that the aviation community had made "a very strong case" for Crystal Airport's value to the Twin-Cities. She closed the hearings indicating no further actions by the committee were necessary.

In summary, AOPA is strongly opposed to unnecessarily revisiting this issue through SF 3753 and HF 4102 and ask that committee members cast a no vote. These bills are duplicative of studies and work already completed by MAC and other local government agencies. Additionally, MAC already works closely with the Metropolitan Council. Crystal Airport plays an important role in the Twin-Cities regional aviation transportation system and cannot be viewed as a "stand alone" airport. What occurs at Crystal will have impacts throughout the local and statewide aviation system.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 301-695-2205 or by e-mail at bill.dunn@aopa.org.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airports

cc: Senator Mike Jungbauer
Senator Linda Scheid
Members, Senate Transportation Committee
Raymond Rought, Director, Aeronautics and Aviation, DOT
Bill Blake, AOPA Great Lakes Regional Representative