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Fax

To: Jim Dougherty From: Cenny Kistner
Fax: 281-220-8984 Pages: 3 including cover
Phone: _____ Date: 11/05/04
Re: _____ CC: _____

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U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Southwest Region
Arkansas, Louisiana,
New Mexico, Oklahoma,
Texas

Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0000

August 30, 2004

Mr. Robert E. Hebert
Fort Bend County Judge
301 Jackson Street, Suite 719
Richmond, TX 77469

Dear Judge Hebert:

This is in response to your letter dated August 23, 2004, regarding Houston Southwest Airport in Arcola, Texas. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed realignment of McKeever Road to meet the proposed extension of South Post Oak Road in the vicinity of the airport.

Before addressing the specific questions you have raised, I would like to make a comment on Houston Southwest Airport and its role in the Houston airport system. The Houston airport system is a valuable asset to the national air transportation system. The system consist of three commercial service airports, George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), William P. Hobby Airport (HOU), Ellington Field (EFD) as well as a number of general aviation airports including seven, which are designated reliever airports to IAH. Houston Southwest Airport was designated a reliever airport by our office on December 15, 2003. Reliever airports are valuable components of the airport system in Houston. The role of general aviation airports in a major metropolitan area and reliever airports in particular is to provide an alternative airport for general aviation aircraft, thereby reducing the number of general aviation aircraft at IAH and HOU. Commercial passenger and cargo aircraft can utilize those valuable landing and takeoff slots.

The general aviation airport system in Houston is somewhat unique in that it is characterized by a number of airports that are privately owned. This type of ownership can be problematic to the long-term viability of a general aviation airport. In the past few years, the Anahuac and Gulf airports closed displacing several hundred aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Texas Department of Transportation, Aviation Division (TXDOT) are concerned with this trend. Both FAA and TXDOT were supportive of Fort Bend County as they investigated the acquisition of Houston Southwest Airport and Waller County as it investigates the development of a new general aviation airport. In our view, public ownership of general aviation airports in the Houston metropolitan area helps ensure the long-term viability of the airports.

The FAA and TXDOT want to support Mr. Griffith in his efforts to operate and maintain a viable general aviation airport to serve the Houston airport system. With a reliever designation, Houston Southwest Airport is eligible to receive Federal funding from the Airport Improvement Program through TXDOT for capital development projects to improve the safety and serviceability of the airport.

The FAA and TXDOT have encouraged Mr. Griffith to develop a capital improvement program to enhance safety by including improvements to bring the airport up to FAA design standards and rehabilitate airfield infrastructure to ensure reliability to the flying public.

One of the impediments that prevent Houston Southwest from meeting FAA design standards is the present location of McKeever Road near the west end of the runway. Vehicles traveling on McKeever Road violate the runway threshold-siting surface. We have encouraged Mr. Griffith to work with local officials to close or relocate McKeever Road consistent with the alignment shown in the Airport Master Plan and depicted in the exhibit enclosed with your letter.

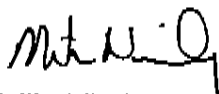
To specifically answer your questions, allowing McKeever Road to exist in its present state or in an improved state East of the realignment proposed in the exhibit (illustrated in orange) would conflict with FAA airport design standards. In addition, McKeever Road in its present location would preclude any extension to the runway. The proposed runway extension has safety as well as serviceability benefits. The most effective way to expand the runway safety area is to extend the runway to the east and displace the Runway 9 threshold. The overall runway length would be increased slightly and would serve the aircraft using the airport in a more effective manner. The present location of McKeever Road also may have an impact on the instrument approach procedure minimums.

As you are investigating the realignment of McKeever and extension of South Post Oak Road, we would encourage you select an alignment that would allow Mr. Griffith to continue to pursue his objective of bringing the airport into compliance with FAA airport design standards. If he is successful the safety of aircraft operations at the airport will be enhanced as well as the safety of motorist traveling from McKeever Road to the proposed South Post Oak Road in the vicinity of the airport.

Please be advised that any alteration of McKeever Road and/or construction of South Post Oak Road near Houston Southwest Airport will require notification to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), prior to starting any construction work. Federal Aviation Regulation, Part 77, Objection Affecting Navigable Airspace requires this notification. You can find the proper notification form (Notice of Proposed Alteration/Construction, Form 7460-1) on our website at www.faa.gov/arp/asw/forms.cfm.

Again we appreciate the opportunity to provide you we our thoughts on this issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,



Mike Nicely
Manager, Texas Airports
Development Office