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July 22, 2002  
Docket Management System, U.S.  
Department of Transportation  
Room Plaza 401, 400 Seventh Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Docket No. FAA-2002-12261; Notice No. 02-09 -44

Dear Sirs:

My name is Nathan Lee. I am a Captain for Network Power Systems, Raleigh, NC. We are a small flight department, employing two pilots and operating one Citation 550, a 1981 model, serial # 550-0277.

Having read the NPRM for DRVSM, Docket NO. FAA-2002-12261, we have several concerns that we would like to have addressed in the final rule making. First let me say that as far as the idea of RVSM goes, we have no objections. We understand that there is the technology available to make of use of the extra altitudes and as such it would be a poor use of resources not to use them to our benefit. Our problems arise out of the proposed implementation time frame.

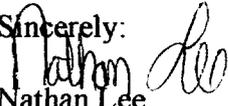
By your own admission "approximately twenty-two percent of flights in the U.S. are already conducted by aircraft that have been approved for RVSM operations." (Page 31921 *Aircraft Operating in U.S. Airspace Already Approved for RVSM* Paragraph 1) This leaves 78% of flights left to comply in only two years. Whether this translates to 78% of aircraft being non-compliant is not clearly stated. In any case there seems to be a majority of qualifying aircraft not yet compliant, most of them older aircraft such as our own. This being the case, I do not see how it can be stated (Page 31923 *Timeframe for significant majority of flights to be conducted by RVSM approved aircraft* Paragraph 1) that "the FAA found that many U.S. aircraft and operators have already obtained RVSM approval." How does 22% of flights equal a majority of operators?

This leads to our second concern. Supposing that this rule is approved in its present form, it is stated later in that same paragraph "Many operators are planning for completion of RVSM engineering work late in 2004" (Page 31924). This will lead to a run on parts and a severe lack of space in approved maintenance facilities. In our case, for our aircraft, there is one STC available and since we only do maintenance at Citation Service Centers, are limited to nine facilities. There seems to be little consideration of this fact. Even if we had the final ruling at this time, with over 700 of our model aircraft, at least a month per aircraft to install the equipment (Cessna avionics supervisor estimate) there would be a significant time crunch. This does not even take into account all of the other older Cessna models requiring retrofitting, or the need to submit paperwork to the FAA for approval, approval process time (bureaucracy), and limited number of altitude certification ground stations (HMU) and GPS based units (GMU). All this leads to a time

and parts crunch of colossal proportions. Things are made worse by the fact that we do not have a final ruling, making planning and scheduling hard. We have also not been told where the three ground based certification stations (HMU) will be, nor the schedule for their implementation. All this with less than 2 ½ years to the proposed implementation deadline (maybe less than 2 years by the time we receive a final ruling).

What is our proposal? Relief in the proposed time schedule. Although the FAA disagrees at this time with our analysis we feel that a phased implementation would smooth the transition to RVSM operations. While I cannot argue with the study conducted by the FAA from a statistical point-of-view (although no statistics were given), from a logical point-of-view, I do not understand the statement made. "The FL 290-410 implementation scenario offered significant advantages in that it provided reductions in controller workload, airspace complexity and potential for error." (page 31923 *Factors Considered in Developing the Implementation Plan* paragraph under *Phased implementation*) Why would this not be the case on a lesser scale for FL350-410 implementation? While phased implementation may not be a perfect solution, for the reasons stated above neither is the full implementation of DRVSM in December 2004. Surely phased implementation starting from FL350-410 would take no more work to implement than FL 290-410, and while not giving immediate full benefit would increase the airspace utilization and allow RVSM procedures domestically to be tested, monitored, and refined. As the demand on airspace continues to increase, then the full program would be implemented at a later date. From our perspective, this would give the best of both worlds. First ATC would see the benefit of increased airspace usage and thus increased flexibility. Second those operators who are compliant would be able to use the extra altitudes to reduce fuel usage. And third, the extra time would alleviate the run on parts and facility space and would allow non-compliant operators to continue to operate their aircraft efficiently up to FL330 while completing the process to comply with RVSM equipment and certification requirements.

We appreciate the time you take to consider our petition. We hope that this will benefit you as you make the final decision.

Sincerely:  


Nathan Lee

Captain

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