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January 21, 2004

Mr. Paul K. Dykeman, Deputy Director
Office of Environment and Energy
Federal Aviation Administration

c/o Docket Management Facility
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW, Nassif Building, Room PL-401
Washington DC 20590-001

Subject: Comments on NPRM for Stage 4 Aircraft Noise Standards
Reference: Docket No. FA-2003-16526, Notice No. 03-12

Dear Mr. Dykeman: *FAA - 2003 - 16526 - 10*

On behalf of the City of Naples Airport Authority (NAA), I am submitting comments to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for Stage 4 Aircraft Noise Standards, under 14 CFR Parts 36 and 91.

The NAA is owner and operator of Naples Municipal Airport, a commercial service airport located in the City of Naples (Collier County), Florida. In addition to scheduled passenger service (currently in propeller-driven aircraft), the airport supports a broad range of general aviation operators, including helicopters, light propeller-driven aircraft, and general aviation jets.

The NAA assigns a high priority to noise compatibility in its direction of airport development and operations. Since 1987, the NAA has pursued its noise compatibility objectives under the Part 150 Program, and most recently under the Part 161 Program. The Part 150 process has led to FAA-approved actions by the NAA, the City of Naples, and Collier County to implement a comprehensive package of noise abatement, compatible land use, and community awareness measures. In 1997, in response to community concerns regarding operations of the noisiest general aviation jets, the NAA sought and received FAA approval of a restriction of non-emergency night Stage 1 jet operations. In 1998, the NAA sought FAA approval to extend that restriction to 24-hour application. The FAA approved that extension in 1999. Despite these ambitious noise compatibility actions, aircraft noise remained a major community concern, which led the NAA in 2000 to conduct a Part 161 Study to address Part 36 Stage 2 operations.

Our review of the NPRM indicates to us that it prolongs the federal government's pattern of overlooking the principal noise issue of concern facing airports such as Naples Municipal and its operations of Stage 1 and 2 general aviation jets. These aircraft produce such inherently high noise levels that individual operations can eclipse the benefits of aggressively implemented operational measures, such as preferential runway use, noise abatement flight paths, and "quiet flying" arrival and departure procedures. Even relatively limited numbers of operations in Stage 1 and 2 aircraft can lead to strong adverse community reaction, resulting in airport opposition.

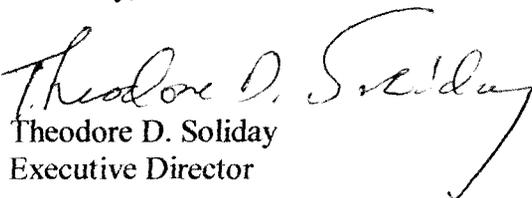
The proposed Stage 4 noise standards ignore the continuing impact of Stage 1 and 2 operations on residents of communities surrounding general aviation airports, and offer no promise of relief. The federal government has treated those residents inequitably, compared to residents of areas affected by operations of "air carrier" jets (i.e., aircraft with maximum weights over 75,000 pounds). By January 1, 1988, the federal government had enforced a nationwide ban on Stage 1 civil jet operations over 75,000 pounds. On January 1, 2000, the federal government completed a mandatory phased transition to a full Stage 3 fleet of civil jets over 75,000 pounds (in the contiguous 48 states). The federal government has never proposed a similar program addressing aircraft under 75,000 pounds, which we continue to find amazing.

The NPRM compounds this inequity, by failing to recognize it. The "Brief History of U.S. Noise Regulations" presented at the beginning of the "Background" section of the summary of Stage 1 and 2 phase outs, without ever recognizing that they applied only to aircraft over 75,000 pounds. An uninformed reader would infer that every community had benefited from these earlier phase outs, when, in fact, significant numbers of residents continue to be affected by Stage 1 and 2 general aviation jet operations, which produce noise levels significantly higher than Stage 3 or 4 air carrier jets, despite considerable differences in weight. This situation provides residents of areas surrounding general aviation airports with less protection from high levels of noise on an event-by-event basis, and provides operators of those airports with less protection from adverse community reaction. This bias in favor of air carrier operations must be addressed.

We strongly urge the FAA to undertake immediate actions to address this inequity. In our opinion, Stage 1 and 2 jet operations less than 75,000 pounds represent a noise issue of more immediate nationwide concern than the need for a Stage 4 production standard.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Theodore D. Soliday
Executive Director