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March 5, 2009

Ms. Lynne A. Osmus
Acting Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Osmus:

I write to you today to request your support for the installation of necessary equipment to connect the Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) of Chesterfield County Airport (FCI) to the National Airspace Data Interchange Network (NADIN).

As you know, AWOS provides weather condition reporting that is critical to terminal aviation operations. Such systems are normally connected to NADIN at the time of installation. An AWOS connection to NADIN allows an airport to automatically transmit weather data to the National Weather Network, which allows aviation officials anywhere in the world to access terminal weather for any of the airports with connected AWOS systems. Without such NADIN connection, an airport can only report weather locally though limited range radio transmission and telephone line. This automatic weather reporting function has become more important as certain commercial operators require real time weather reporting in order to operate at specific airports.

FCI was one of only nine AWOS installations, out of a total 170 AWOS installations across the country, which were not connected to NADIN upon installation. Since FCI's AWOS installation in 1991, FCI representatives and Virginia aviation officials have requested a NADIN connection from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). When these requests were unsuccessful, such officials sought alternative methods of obtaining a NADIN connection. However, since the AWOS is federal property, any "non-federal" connection alternatives are prohibited by FAA. In January 2009, my office contacted FAA Office of Government and Industry Affairs (GIA) regarding this NADIN connection issue and GIA responded that FAA had determined the expense to connect and maintain a NADIN connection could not be justified.

I question this FAA conclusion as I believe that the NADIN connection is necessary for FCI to effectively serve as a Reliever Airport for Richmond International Airport (RIC) and to support FCI's 82,000 annual aviation operations. Currently, FCI cannot be fully utilized as a Reliever Airport because many commercial operators are unable to obtain approved weather data for the facility since it is not connected to the National Weather Network. Furthermore, many aviators who would prefer to use FCI as a destination airport, as opposed to just an alternative landing location, cannot do so because FCI does not maintain a NADIN connection. This

NADIN connection is critical for both commercial and general aviation operators to obtain real time weather at FCI from wherever their flights may originate in the world. Therefore, I respectfully request that FAA revisit the issue of connecting FCI's AWOS to NADIN.

I appreciate your assistance with this matter and look forward to your response. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions with respect to the foregoing, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Assistant for transportation, Brian Perkins (bperkins@mail.house.gov), at (202) 225-6365.

Sincerely,



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress