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Linda Bruce, Colorado State Planner
Federal Aviation Administration
Denver Airport District Office (ADO)
26805 East 68th Avenue, suite 224
Denver, Colorado 80249

Dear Ms. Bruce,

My City Councilman was kind enough to copy me with the recommendations of the FAA, as well as the City's position on those recommendations. I wish I had gotten a chance to see them before the Council considered them, because I would have loved to offer some testimony regarding them at the hearing.

First, some background.

First of all, I live in Centennial, in Ward IV. I live only a few miles from Centennial airport, and also about the same distance from Buckley Air Force Base.

Secondly, I am a pilot, holding a Commercial Pilot license. I don't currently fly large aircraft, but do fly single-engine aircraft out of Centennial (KAPA). I fly better than a hundred hours per year from that airport.

Being a pilot, I pay very close attention to the air traffic in and around my home. I find the air traffic quite sparse, and the noise is negligible. The traffic from BAFB is even more sparse, but the noise generated by the F-16s and F-15s that come and go from that facility cause the general aviation traffic noise to pale in comparison. Still, I don't find the aircraft noise from either source distracting, or in any way unpleasant. None of my neighbors, most of which know me as an avid pilot, have expressed any concerns regarding noise. In fact, I have heard some of them comment favorably to the noise caused by USAF fighters overhead, commenting that such is the "sound of freedom".

Over the years, I have carefully reviewed the noise complaints statistics regarding Centennial Airport. I find that the vast majority of those complaints seem to find only a few sources. In fact, it seems that only a few households are trying to "wag the dog" with a multitude of complaints. I would be willing to bet that those complainers are registering a complaint regarding aircraft noise that would not bother the vast majority of citizens.

Every pilot I know of, who flies out of Centennial, is careful to fly routes which will cause the least number of issues with houses below. We all fly over major highways, open areas, and avoid heavy throttle use in areas that might cause complaints. There might be some pilots who scoff at those below, but not many. I don't know any pilots who fly out of Centennial who consciously try to irritate homeowners.

Having said that, I would like to comment on the specifics of the recommendations, if I might.

Ban all Stage One aircraft. The arrivals at Centennial of all jets is relatively quiet. They arrive with dramatically reduced throttle settings, and one must listen closely to even hear them. These are no factor. The take-offs of jets from Centennial occur on only one runway. That is 17L and 35R. The departures to the north are over Cherry Creek Reservoir, so there is no real issues with housing. The departures to the south are over a very sparsely-populated area, and so that shouldn't be a problem, either. I don't see any gain in banning this type of aircraft. There may come a day when an owner of an older warbird wants to house it and fly from Centennial, and he should not be prevented from doing so by a ban that has no practical point.

Ban all Stage Two jets at night from 10 pm till 6 am. Centennial is home to at least two companies which carry executives in their medium-sized twin-engine jets. Also, there are some emergency medical flights which use Centennial. There is no other option for departures on the south side of Denver metro. These people normally cannot decide when a business urgency or a medical emergency will require them to travel later at night. Again, the departures are generally over very sparsely-occupied areas, and are quite rare anyhow. I believe this restriction is unreasonable. The airport has been in its current location very much longer than any housing development in the area, and it seems that those who build houses in the flight patterns of busy airports might have taken this into consideration before building or buying in that area. It is not good policy to require the predecessor to bow to the needs of the newcomer, unless there is a compelling need. I see no compelling need. I very much disagree with any ban, and especially with any recommendation of the City to make it larger.

Amend zoning and planning documents to accommodate compatible development. I believe that this is the best recommendation. The City needs to step up to the plate, and realize that the airport is a vital link of commerce to its existence. If things work as the City envisions, the airport will become more important – and more busy – than it currently is now. It would seem that people who build and buy houses are not wise enough to recognize the flight patterns of an existing airport, so maybe the City will need to inject a dose of reality through its zoning process. However, I don't think the City has any need to be involved in the operations of KAPA. Their wording of the recommendation is nothing short of an open invitation to have an unreasonable degree of control over what happens at the airport. This is because they will doubtlessly argue that pretty much everything that happens there “affects the City and its citizens.” I strongly recommend against this added phrase.

Establish a Noise Office. The city says this has already been done. I would hope that this office would take seriously the complaints regarding barking dogs, and loud motorcycles, which I find to be much more prevalent, and a far greater nuisance in the city than any aircraft noise.

Acquire and install a radar linked noise monitoring system. I believe this is an invitation to a “micromanaging” by the city government that is not only unnecessary, but also expensive. Already there is a noise reporting system in place, as found on the KAPA web site, which has served us well for quite some time. I strongly recommend against this action. It is unnecessary, and invites disaster with the Airport Authority.

Establish a “Fly Quiet” program for the flying community at Centennial airport. This has already been in place at Centennial Airport for many years. I believe there is nothing further needed at this point. Even the recommendation seems to ignore that this has been in place.

Conduct periodic reviews of the plans and operational procedures. I believe this makes sense. Dialog, especially when it involves people who actually know what they are talking about, is quite useful.

Conduct a standing “Roundtable” of stakeholders. I don’t mind that the City be involved, but I suspect the people on the Council will be unable to restrain themselves to extend their authority as far as they can as quickly as they can. I would very much like to be a part of the process, but people from the Airport, who make life happen out there every day, need to have a large voice.

Departing aircraft to the north will fly a heading of 010 degrees (for two miles) at night from the hours of ten pm and 7 am. I don’t think this will make any real difference. I recommend against this. The recommendation was not framed by someone who flies, for the statement “After two miles the aircraft will either be turned north of west” demonstrates a lack of understanding that 010 degrees is pretty much north already, and is slightly *east* of north. Turning north and west puts the plane into the traffic patterns of KBJC, or close to the TFR over Mile-High Stadium. Besides, what if the pilot needs to go east or south? This recommendation is unworkable to a pilot.

Flight test a 350 to 010 degrees fan departure track on a twenty four hour basis. This is not needed. We already know what the noise sensitive areas are. See the KAPA website. This does not make sense to me.

Eliminate the “Preferential Runway” use procedure. Whoever wrote this recommendation doesn’t have to buy aircraft fuel, nor does he think-through the unintended consequences of such a recommendation. When a plane departs to the north, and must turn to the south, it will overfly a bunch of residences, then causing more noise complaints. It is smarter to simply depart to the south, when able. Besides, this doesn’t happen all that much at Centennial. The controllers designate a runway, and the ATIS recording already states which runways are in use. This is a silly recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I truly hope most of these recommendations are not implemented.

Sincerely,

H. J. Ledbetter, Jr.