

IMPROVED PILOT BRIEFING FACILITIES

(11) Place into effect the new flight service station program jointly worked out by industry and the FAA.

Background

AOPA and other aviation organizations have worked with the FAA in a series of meetings for many months to develop a program for a better network of flight service stations designed to provide essential services, including weather briefing to pilots, on a much wider and more effective basis than the existing system. The new system would consist of a basic network of full-time stations, supplemented by a number of smaller part-time stations located on the busier general aviation airports. We understand that this proposed new system has the approval of top FAA echelon, but there is yet no evidence of it being placed into effect. The greatly increased briefing capabilities of the proposed system would make essential weather and other flight information available to many more pilots than under the existing system and would greatly enhance safety.

THE NEED FOR GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT FACILITIES

(12) Redirect the emphasis of the National Airport Plan to provide adequate facilities for general aviation, including short parallel runways on major airports, good satellite airports in major metropolitan areas and an improved system of general aviation airports (and facilities) in areas where the need exists.

Background

There has been much loose talk about banning general aviation from the major airports. This is not practical from either a legal or a practical viewpoint. These public airports must serve all comers and there are many general aviation flights that must use the major airports because of the nature of their business, which quite frequently consists of handling connecting passengers for the airlines, or the fact that no other suitable airport exists. Short parallel runways will greatly expedite traffic handling and will enhance safety by allowing the general aviation aircraft to stay out of the areas of dangerous vortices created by the larger aircraft. Good satellite airports, with adequate facilities, will attract general aviation traffic that does not have to go to the major airport. Most pilots would prefer such an arrangement, but good facilities generally do not exist today in many metropolitan areas, leaving the pilot no choice. In other areas, there is a great need for improved general aviation airports.

The legislative history of the Federal Airport Act is crystal clear about the intent of the Congress being to encourage private flying through a nationwide system of good airports, reaching a total of some 6,000 airports in seven years at an expenditure of over one billion dollars. The need for airports for private flying was recognized as a legitimate need and the major thrust of the justification for the Act was oriented to this objective. However, over the years, the original intent has been perverted to the point that now, just twenty years later, the total program is just reaching the billion-dollar level—and for about 2,300 airports instead of 6,000—with 83 percent of the total expenditures having gone to airline airports. The present priority system of the FAA for Federal aid expenditures for airports further emphasizes this derogation of the original intent of the Act by placing top priority on the needs of the commercial operators to the detriment of the needs of general aviation. AOPA recommended a revised schedule of priorities to the FAA Administrator in June of 1966 (Annex G) that more nearly meets the intent of the Federal Airport Act, as expressed in the legislative history.

AOPA has urged the FAA Administrator to take action on the above recommendations and we stand ready to assist the FAA in these programs in every way that we can. We realize that the FAA has not had time to study our August 23 letter in depth, even though some of the recommendations were known to their staff for quite some time. We expect to be working with them as time goes on since we do have a vital interest in safety in the air. While the Government has the responsibility for safety programs in the public interest, the pilots who fly