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Tom George
Alaska Regional Manager, AOPA

March 14, 2014

The Honorable Dennis Egan
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Egan:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation organization, representing the general aviation interests of pilots and aircraft owners, including approximately 4,000 of our members in the state of Alaska. Since 1939, AOPA has been committed to ensuring the safety, future viability and development of general aviation as an integral part of our nation's transportation system. On behalf of AOPA and our members we thank you and the Senate Transportation Committee for sponsoring Senate Bill 211, addressing land transfers and administrative details between the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

We understand that the changes in this bill will allow DOT&PF to more efficiently deal with land transfers and other administrative details which are needed to construct and maintain airports and other transportation infrastructure across the state.

We strongly support the provisions in the bill that would transfer land containing the Happy Valley and Franklin Bluffs airstrips to DOT&PF. The Happy Valley airstrip, originally built to support construction of the Trans Alaska Pipeline, is the only road-accessible airstrip in the northern foothills of the Brooks Range. It provides much needed access for recreational, industrial and government activities in this portion of the North Slope. Land for the Franklin Bluffs airstrip is also needed. Often coastal weather keeps aircraft operating under visual flight rules from being able to land at Deadhorse. An emergency airstrip is needed there for aircraft to land and wait. Today, aircraft are forced to land on the road when unforecast weather occurs.

Airports are an important component of Alaska's transportation infrastructure. Thank you for your attention to this legislation.

Sincerely,

Tom George
Alaska Regional Manager