

PA House Transportation Committee Hearing Regarding House Bills HB 72 Aviation Sales Tax Exemption, HB 74 GA Airport Security, March 11, 2008

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The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is the metro planning agency designated and funded by FAA, since 1980, to accomplish Regional Aviation System Planning for the four state twelve county Philadelphia Metropolitan Area. Counties include Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, Chester and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, Mercer, Burlington, Gloucester, Camden and Salem in New Jersey, as well as Cecil Co., Maryland, and New Castle Co., Delaware. I have served as Manager for the effort since 1982.

My comments today will pertain to security issues and measures at non-commercial service, general aviation airports. In the wake of 9/11/01, communities in the Delaware Valley region expressed concern that G.A. airports in their area could be the sight of or staging areas for terrorist activity. In the absence of TSA specific guidance or regulation regarding small recreational or business airports, DVRPC undertook, in 2004, a security assessment study of 22 such airports in our 12 county regional system (and Capital City Airport in Harrisburg) using FAA systems planning funds, and with the support of PennDOT. The following are the primary findings and recommendations.

Study framework - Surveys and interviews were done at all airports. A risk assessment model was developed which would identify GA airport risk relative to other airports in the study. Airport risk relative to other forms of transport risk like ports, trucks, cars, rail, commercial aircraft was not established. Risk of aircraft at GA being used as weapon was found to be related to four major criteria. 1) Runway length related to size of aircraft, 2) critical public infrastructure nearby, 3) level of operations of 12,500 annual take offs and landing at the airport, 4) Agricultural activities. Risk levels for the study were found to be, by airport, PA - 3 high risk, 7 medium, 3 low; NJ-1 medium, 4 low, 2 very low, Del - 1 medium, Maryland - 1 low.

Counter-measures, proposed in the study, were recommended in cumulative groups, from very low to high, as follows: Very low risk - 1) airport security awareness campaign, 2) single point of contact notification plan, 3) secure all aircraft keys. Low risk - 1) secure aircraft, 2) Random security patrols, 3) Response agreement with local police. Medium risk - 1) local security service contingency contract, 2) employee I.D. system. 3) controlled vehicle access. High Risk - 1) I.D. checks, 2) minimize operational access points, 3) verify cargo/baggage to passengers or flight, 4) verify aircraft owner/crew before departure.

Please note that countermeasures are generally procedural in nature and designed to not be a capital cost burden to airports or aircraft owners.

Finally, regarding the above recommendation to secure aircraft, let me comment of feedback gathered from the aviation community. Some PA pilots have expressed that the two lock rule, if it includes a prop lock, creates potential for a crash or property damage if the lock is not removed before flight. Also it was suggested that proposed legislation be tailored to business aircraft operating at GA airports since they have the higher potential to do damage because of a heavier payload. NJ Aviation officials have told me they have had no resistance to the two lock rule, and a NJ pilot said that rule is a appropriate concession to security and neighbor relations. The rule is enforced on a spot check basis through the normal NJDOT airport inspection process.

Thank you for your attention.