

**PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARING
COMMENTS**

May 28, 2009

**Michael J McGee
Horsham Township Manager
Executive Director, Horsham Authority for NAS JRB**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Welcome to Horsham Township ranked by CNN Money Magazine as number 15 of the top 100 places in America to live. The Magazine periodically lists the best places to live and in 2007, the list concentrated on communities with a population between 7,500 and 50,000. They focus on places that offer the best combination of economic opportunity, good schools, safe streets, things to do and a real sense of community. They pointed to our extensive park system, library, award winning schools, wide range of housing and our business parks as some of the reasons for our high ranking. In their analysis, they noted that the pending closure of NAS JRB Willow Grove was both a challenge and an opportunity for the community to reshape its' future. The elected, appointed, and business leaders as well as the residents of this community and indeed the whole region could not agree more. Horsham Township is proud to have been the home base for so many members of the military and their families since the 1940s. Residents of Horsham have served with pride in every major conflict around the world since then. While NAS JRB Willow Grove is being closed in accordance with BRAC 2005, the same law created a military enclave that

will be located on the former Air Force Reserve Center property that is contiguous to NAS JRB Willow Grove. Although the Military no longer have any aircraft at the base, the enclave and thus Horsham will continue to be home to many Army Reservists and National Guardsmen for the foreseeable future and we are thankful that they will continue to be an integral part of our community.

The future use of the former military base as the Horsham Joint Interagency Installation will impact the quality of life in our region for many generations to come. The base occupies approximately 10 percent of Horsham's land mass and as with any major property user there are both positive and negative impacts. We will continue to work with the state in an attempt to mitigate the negative impacts to insure a positive future. While the HJII is located within Horsham Township, the impacts will be felt throughout the entire region. Horsham Township enjoys the support of our neighboring township as we plan for the future. We are committed to working with the State as you move forward with the first and only such installation in the country. If we clearly establish the ground rules and the vision for the future the Township and the State can work together as partners to ensure the successful fulfillment of the missions of the HJII. This partnership should be based on mutual trust and understanding as well as open communication. We believe that both House Bill 111 and Senate Bill 48 provide the basis upon which our relationship can grow and prosper. The provision in both bills defining associated users as "nongovernmental organizations and private entities performing the national defense, homeland security or emergency preparedness missions of the installation, which are tenants of the installation under lease, license or other similar

access or use agreements” surely is in keeping with the stated mission and the purpose for which the HJII was created. Both bills also prohibit the use of the airfield property by nongovernmental aviation operations not performing the missions of the installation. We believe that these provisions create a very clear vision for the future use of the property and that vision is consistent with the vision as articulated by the Governor and his staff. These provisions along with the provision calling for Horsham Township and the Hatboro Horsham School District to be third party beneficiaries to any leases or licenses to future users of the property are essential to developing the state-township partnership. Hearing opposition to such elementary provisions is a cause of concern on our part. Horsham and the Military have enjoyed a long relationship built on mutual respect and communication. We look forward to the same with the State.

Mr. Chairman with your approval I would like to reserve my unused allocated time to clarify the Township’s position should it be needed before the hearing is closed.

Thank you.