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The SSB Urges the City to End the FAA Lawsuit Now

Boulder, October 1, 2025

Dear Mayor Brockett, Mayor Pro-Tem Folkert, Members of the Boulder City Council:

On behalf of the Soaring Society of Boulder and its 160 members I would like to urge the City of Boulder to discontinue the lawsuit against the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and to begin accepting FAA grant funding again immediately.

While it is understandable that the City sought to obtain a quick and relatively inexpensive clarification whether it is ultimately free to decide about the long-term future of the airport, the dismissal of the City's lawsuit has created an entirely different situation:

- The City's case no longer rests on relatively simple "Quiet Title" arguments but instead on highly complex constitutional claims that would be vigorously contested by the federal government at every level.
- It is now clear that the desired clarification cannot even be sought before 2040. Given the complexities involved, a final decision is likely to take many years longer.
- Most importantly, the total cost of further pursuing this case has increased by orders of magnitude: until a final decision is made, the City would not only have to pay for its lawyers. It would also have to spend tens of millions of dollars on maintaining the airport to FAA standards at the expense of local taxpayers.

Discontinuing the legal case and accepting FAA grants reflects the wishes of Boulder residents who overwhelmingly support the airport. The City's own survey, conducted in 2023 as part of the Community Engagement Project to determine the airport's future, showed that only 16% of respondents were in favor of airport closure.

Keeping the airport has more compelling benefits than ever before:

- It ensures its future availability for aerial firefighting and other emergency operations at a time when the risk of an urban fire starting on open space around Boulder is greater than ever and is only to increase further. (Remember that a future heliport is by no means an adequate substitute because it could not possibly support the type of operations needed to fight wildfires or respond to floods and other large-scale emergencies.)
- Accepting FAA funds makes the airport self-sustaining again. (Over the past two years, the airport enterprise fund has already been depleted because the City stopped taking grants. Going forward the City will have to massively subsidize the airport unless new grants are taken.)

- The millions of dollars thereby saved from the City budget are urgently needed for other key priorities, not least to shore up wildfire preparedness.
- Even aside from firefighting, flood events, and other emergency uses, the benefits of maintaining the Boulder airport are only going to grow, e.g. in the context of Boulder hosting the Sundance Film Festival.
- It preserves an important resource for the entire community, enabling pilot training, youth engagement, and sporting achievements* in a community-oriented environment.
- It will end years of uncertainty about the airport's future rather than prolonging it for the next 15-25 years. It is already overdue.

You should also rest assured that noise and lead, the two most cited concerns in conjunction with the airport, will further diminish in relevance.

- New unleaded airplane fuels will rapidly reduce the use of lead in airplane fuels and likely phase out leaded fuel completely by 2040. Boulder can locally accelerate this timeline.
- Our club has been ready for unleaded fuel for more than two years and we are excited that the new airport manager, Eric Vences, is already pro-actively looking for ways to bring unleaded fuel to the airport.
- Noise levels will be drastically reduced by the increased use of much quieter and more fuel-efficient light sport aircraft that are increasingly used for pilot training. More and more of these will be electric.
- Our club has already been actively reducing noise through the increasing adoption of self-launching gliders which do not need a tow plane to get airborne. One such glider is already fully electric, and more are on order.

Finally, as the City grapples with how to deal with ever-increasing wildfire risk, dropping the lawsuit and accepting FAA grants again is the only coherent strategy: it frees up resources to invest in wildfire preparedness AND it assures that the airport remains a vital resource to respond to the next emergency in a timely manner.

Thank you for your consideration!

Respectfully,



Clemens Ceipek
President – Soaring Society of Boulder

* PS: I'd be remiss if I didn't underscore the crucial importance of the airport for our sport of gliding. Boulder is one of the best soaring locations in the world as demonstrated by our recent success in the Soaring World League where the SSB became global Vice Champion competing against more than 750 soaring organizations worldwide. Last week, the [Daily Camera reported our success on its title page](#).