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September 22, 2009

Administrator Randy Babbitt
Federal Aviation Administration
U. S. Department of Transportation
800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D. C. 20951
(202) 267-3111

COPY

DOCKET
01-AFC-7C
DATE SEP 22 2009
RECD OCT 05 2009

Re: Proposed Russell City Energy Center in Hayward, California

Dear Administrator Babbitt,

I am writing to express the safety concerns a significant number of my constituents have brought to my attention related to the possible approval of the Russell City Energy Center. The proposed 600-megawatt natural gas power plant would be built within 1.5 miles of the Hayward Executive Airport in my Congressional District.

During consideration by the California Energy Commission (CEC), staff expressed concerns regarding the impacts of thermal plumes from the plants cooling towers and exhaust stacks on aircraft using the Hayward Executive Airport. Eventually, the CEC concluded that the potential dangers of the thermal plumes could be mitigated. Partly this conclusion was based on the CEC's reading of a 2006 FAA study entitled "Safety Risk Analysis of Aircraft Overflight of Industrial Plumes." The CEC decided that the FAA report supported their contention that a "Notice to Airmen" to not fly in a portion of the airspace closest to the proposed plant would be sufficient to mitigate any potential safety risk.

My office has been contacted by numerous pilots that use the Hayward Executive Airport as well as by local community members who are concerned about the potential risks posed by operation of the Russell City plant in such close proximity to the airport. In light of these concerns and the concerns raised by the CEC staff during permit consideration, as well as the CEC's reliance on the 2006 FAA report, I would like your agency to address the following issues:

(1) Has the FAA thoroughly examined the potential safety risks that the Russell City Energy Center may pose for the Hayward Executive Airport?
(2) Has the FAA analyzed whether "Notice to Airmen" to avoid thermal plumes has been sufficient to avoid potential dangers at airports within a 3-5 mile radius of power plants that have come on line in the last 5 years?

(3) Does the FAA plan to study the effect that a "Notice to Airmen" concerning the Russell City Energy Center would have on the Hayward Executive Airport as well as the three larger commercial airports in the Bay Area?

I appreciate your time and concern for these issues and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Pete Stark

Pete Stark
Member of Congress