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COLORADO AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION REBUTS USA TODAY ARTICLE ON GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS

The Colorado Airport Operators Association (CAOA) joins the aviation community today in rebutting the September 17th, 2009 article run by USA Today "Feds keep little-used airports in business". The article is considered by the Colorado Airport Operators Association to be a one sided view of general aviation airports, with a predetermined angle taken by USA Today writer Thomas Frank. The article portrays through several examples, how the taxes paid by the typical commercial air traveler go to benefit small airports around the country, which are used by a few elite individuals who have the means to travel utilizing general aviation aircraft. "The portrayal of general aviation airports as being a tax subsidized segment of the national air transportation system by commercial air travelers is wholly inaccurate, and does an incredible disservice to the tens of thousands of people and companies employed in the general aviation industry, and the communities that directly benefit from their existence" according to Michael A. Reisman, President of the Colorado Airport Operators Association.

Colorado's 60 general aviation airports alone are directly responsible for 15,438 aviation related jobs, and an additional 7,212 jobs which exist throughout the state in support of these airports. General aviation airport employees in Colorado earn over 749 million dollars annually in payroll, and their total economic impact throughout the State is in excess of 1.9 billion dollars annually. Colorado's general aviation airports provide critical access to numerous communities and hundreds of businesses throughout the state. Reliance upon these airports includes local businesses, local residents, visitors travelling to the areas served by general aviation airports, tourism, air cargo, air ambulance services, aerial firefighting, and a host of other services.

The USA Today article focused on how commercial air travelers are subsidizing the development and upkeep of general aviation airports. However, it was extremely short sighted in failing to address how the network of general aviation airports throughout the U.S. relieves the congestion at the nation's air carrier airports, thus contributing to a safe and efficient air transportation system, and the national economy.

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