U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

January 31, 2014

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, P.L. 112-95, Section 811, required the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in consultation with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security to develop a plan that would decrease operational impacts and improve general aviation access to airports in the National Capital Region that are currently impacted by the zone.

During the summer of 2012, the FAA reached out to members of the general aviation community, including the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association to solicit ideas and input on ways to decrease the operational impact of the SFRA/FRZ. Over the next several months representatives from the FAA, DOD, and United States Secret Service (USSS) reviewed and discussed these initiatives.

After careful review, it was agreed that a trial to allow pattern work and practice instrument approaches at MD3 airports would be conducted. All of the other initiatives were rejected due to their potential negative impact on security operations and early warning parameters.

The trial commenced on May 31, 2013, and was terminated on July 31, 2013. After a thorough review of trial data, no negative safety or workload issues were identified. The test successfully demonstrated that pattern work and practice instrument approaches could be conducted safely and efficiently, and that the associated procedures could be integrated into existing FRZ requirements. Members of the general aviation community and airport operators expressed their positive support for continuation of the procedures. Numerous pilots commented that allowing pattern work and practice approaches to continue would enhance safety and encourage local aviators to more frequently practice basic flying maneuvers, thereby increasing airspace access and lessening the impact of current SFRA/FRZ restrictions. Additionally, airport operators have stated that increased flight activity by vetted pilots would have a positive economic impact on the overall local economy and specifically to their airports through increased fuel sales, usage fees, and flight instruction revenue.

Despite the acknowledged enhancements to safety and airspace access, the FAA must also give considerable weight to the objections raised by the USSS, United States Capital Police (USCP) and the United States Park Police (USPP). FAA received official correspondence from USSS, USCP, and USPP expressing security concerns with the MD3 airports. Based on their written objections and their parallel requests that no further pattern work/practice approaches be allowed, the FAA has terminated the procedures and will not be pursuing the rulemaking activity necessary to permanently implement these procedures.

Since all of the other potential initiatives were previously rejected by the interagency working group during the planning process no further work on this initiative is planned, and the FAA considers our requirements under Section 811 to be satisfied.

Identical letters have been sent to Chairmen Rockefeller and McCaul, Senator Thune, and Congressmen Rahall and Thompson.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Huerta
Administrator

U.S. Department
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January 31, 2014

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Rahall:

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, P.L. 112-95, Section 811, required the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in consultation with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security to develop a plan that would decrease operational impacts and improve general aviation access to airports in the National Capital Region that are currently impacted by the zone.

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Sincerely,

Michael P. Huerta
Administrator

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January 31, 2014

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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January 31, 2014

The Honorable John Thune
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

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January 31, 2014

The Honorable Michael T. McCaul
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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January 31, 2014

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Thompson:

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, P.L. 112-95, Section 811, required the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in consultation with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security to develop a plan that would decrease operational impacts and improve general aviation access to airports in the National Capital Region that are currently impacted by the zone.

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