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News Release

Source: US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association

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AIRPORT DELAYS MANUFACTURED TO FOOL CAPITAL HILL

PHONY FLIGHT DELAYS

Chicago, IL—The massive flight delays experienced by the flying public are at least, in part, manufactured by the aviation industry and the U.S. Department of Transportation, according to US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association (US-CAWA). The purpose of this industry-government ruse is to give the appearance that new runways and infrastructure are urgently needed, in order to sway Congress to pass legislation and allocate funds aimed at increasing overall flight volume at least twofold by the year 2010.

The unprecedented levels of delays that are occurring at major U.S. airports were predicted in a 1995 Department of Transportation report entitled "A Study of the High-Density Rule." The study stated that, if the so-called slot rule was relaxed, system-wide delays would follow. The slot rule was instituted in 1969 at four of the nation's busiest airports -- O'Hare, JFK International, LaGuardia, and Reagan National -- to help relieve delay and congestion. "The aviation industry and the federal government know how to manipulate the slot-controlled airports that bottleneck the whole system, causing massive delays," says Jack Saporito, president of US-CAWA.

Since 1995, exceptions to the slot rule have been made, resulting in increased delays. The recent passage of the aviation industry-sponsored bill AIR-21 (the Airport Reform and Investment Act for the 21st Century) has led to overscheduling, which has worsened the delay problem.

In addition to overscheduling, flights are delayed for other reasons, including labor and maintenance problems, adverse weather, and equipment malfunction. None of these factors, which account for the vast majority of delays, would be addressed by new runway construction.

Airport operators, industry groups, and federal agencies have mounted an intensive two-pronged public relations campaign for airport expansion. The first premise of this campaign is that aviation is the economic engine driving prosperity, and the second is that the benefits of aviation growth outweigh the environmental consequences. The latter assumption "is quite a stretch," says Saporito,

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"considering that aviation emissions cause the worst environmental problems, which create the worst public-health problems we face today."

Airport-expansion proponents want Congress to eliminate or severely reduce the already inadequate environmental protections and to insulate airports from court challenges by communities. Language to this end was inserted into AIR-21 and at least two other bills scheduled to be introduced in the Senate.

"Officially, the government claims that only 500,000 Americans are adversely affected by aircraft noise," says Saporito. "Yet actual noise monitoring by communities around O'Hare Airport shows that more than 1.6 million residents could be affected by one airport alone."

US-CAWA contends that the FAA and the aviation industry are trying to minimize significant public-health and environmental impacts that could adversely affect more than 70% of the population. The organization is sending a letter to President Bush and other key officials, asking for a meeting in order to try to address these issues.

US-CAWA advocates the development of other viable options for mass transit, such as a world-class, high-speed rail system, to decrease the current dependence on air transport for short-distance travel.

US-CAWA is a national organization representing approximately 1.5 million members in the United States. As a nongovernmental organization, it also has members and affiliate organizations in at least twenty-seven other countries.

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[Editors information:

- Over 2,000 U.S. airports are under expansion. General Aviation Airports GAO/RCED-99-109. May 1999, p.1.
- FAA and NASA predict flights at least double nationally by 2010. National Aviation Research Plans 2000. *Airports Technology Program*. 2.2 Airports Technology Area Description Mission. 1st paragraph.

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- FAA documents show that no matter what changes are planned in aviation, delays will remain at unacceptable levels-even when we implement everything in the pipeline. Robert Pierce, NASA, Dir., Strategy & Analysis. *Kickoff for the Transportation Futures Conference*. Sept. 26, 2000

For more information see: www.us-caw.org]

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