

Memorandum

TO: Airport Commission
FROM: Curt Eikerman
Airside Operations Manager

SUBJECT: FAA RESPONSE ON
SOUTH FLOW PROCEDURE

DATE: February 15, 2017

At the Airport Commission's November 14, 2016 meeting, the Commission received a staff report on the south flow approach issue. The Commission subsequently voted to request Airport staff to draft a letter to ask the FAA to review the south flow procedure to see if any adjustments could be made that would reduce the noise impacts on Sunnyvale residents. A November 30 letter from Airport Director Kim Becker was sent to Regional FAA Administrator Glen Martin. Within the parameters of safety, efficiency and not shifting noise to other areas of the region, the letter requested the FAA to consider if there were a possible solution that could reduce the noise impacts of the approach on Sunnyvale residents. A copy of Director Becker's letter to the FAA is contained in Attachment A.

In a January 4, 2017 conference call with Mr. Martin, staff again reiterated the request in the November 30 letter that the FAA consider any solutions that could reduce the noise impacts of the procedure on Sunnyvale residents.

In a January 6, 2017 letter, Mr. Martin provided the FAA response to the Airport (see Attachment B). The key points in Mr. Martin's response included:

- The south flow approach has been in place for many years.
- The increased use of the south flow approach is based on changed weather conditions.
- Aircraft cannot go higher because of FAA concerns about other air traffic, including final approaches to SFO.
- South flow is the "least favorable configuration" for the Air Traffic Control Tower and Northern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) and "is not utilized more than necessary."

Based on the attached response, staff has concluded that the FAA does not anticipate adjustments to the south flow approach.

Attachments:

- A: November 30, 2016 Letter from Airport Director Kim Becker
B: January 6, 2017 Response from Regional Director Glen Martin

November 30, 2016

Mr. Glen Martin
Regional Administrator
Western-Pacific Region
Federal Aviation Administration
P.O. Box 92007
Los Angeles, CA 90009

Subject: Noise Impacts of South Flow Landing Approach

Dear Mr. Martin:

Over the past several months the Norman Y. Mineta International Airport (SJC) staff has received a significant increase in concerns from Sunnyvale residents over the growing use and noise impacts of the south flow landing approach.

The most common concern expressed by Sunnyvale residents is the density of aircraft passing over their community. Specifically, the ZORSA waypoint on the RNAV Z approach is located directly over a residential neighborhood. Our analysis shows that, historically, when aircraft over the waypoint downwind of SJC runway 12R/L were dispersed over a wide area, there were few complaints from Sunnyvale residents. With the majority of aircraft now consistently passing within a narrow corridor over the waypoint, Sunnyvale residents are experiencing increased noise disturbance from the passing aircraft. Consequently, the number of complaints we are receiving from Sunnyvale is rapidly growing.

We have heard the complaints from multiple channels – directly from Sunnyvale officials, at a well-attended Sunnyvale town hall meeting, at our Airport Commission meeting and from numerous complaints received by the Airport's Noise Office.

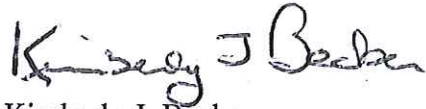
Since air traffic procedures are within the sole jurisdiction the FAA, I am writing to ask if your staff could review south flow flight procedures with the goal of identifying possible solutions to reduce the noise impacts on Sunnyvale residents. We realize that safety cannot be compromised and that retaining operational efficiencies is critical. We also understand and support the FAA's policy of not simply shifting noise from one part of the region to another. However, within these parameters we would ask that the FAA identify possible solutions that work for all concerned parties and could bring some degree of noise relief to Sunnyvale residents.

As an airport that operates in a densely urban environment, we believe it is important to minimize the Airport's environmental impacts on surrounding communities to the extent allowed by safety and efficiency considerations. We are therefore encouraging the FAA to work with Sunnyvale officials, and other key stakeholders, to identify possible solutions. Towards that end, SJC stands ready to appropriately participate in any FAA review of this issue.

Mr. Glen A. Martin – Regional Director/FAA
November 30, 2016
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We appreciate your efforts to work with the region's cities on aircraft noise through the Select Committee on South Bay Arrivals. We hope you will be willing to undertake a similar approach on the south flow issue.

Sincerely,



Kimberly J. Becker
Director of Aviation

cc: Mayor and City Council – City of San José
Mayor Glen Hendricks – City of Sunnyvale



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Western-Pacific Region
Office of the Regional Administrator

P.O. Box 92007
Los Angeles, CA 90009-2007

JAN 06 2017

Ms. Kimberly J. Becker
Director of Aviation
Norman Y. Mineta
San Jose International Airport
1701 Airport Boulevard, Suite B-1130
San Jose, CA 95110-1206

Dear Ms. Becker:

Thank you for your letter dated November 30, 2016, regarding your concerns about growing use and noise impacts of the south flow landing approach.

Consistent with its statutory mission, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) continues to work to ensure the safe and efficient use of our national airspace system.

While safety remains the FAA's highest priority, the agency does attempt to address noise impacts by designing procedures over water and industrial areas when safety and efficiency permit. The FAA is also mindful that while changes to an approach may solve a noise issue in one area, they may simply shift the noise concern from one location to another.

ZORSA is on the Area Navigation (RNAV) Required Navigation Performance (RNP) Z to runway (RWY) 12 at San Jose International Airport (SJC) and is located over Sunnyvale. ZORSA is on the Radius to a Fix leg of the RNP approach and is used during RWY 12 operations. The location of ZORSA has not changed. The RWY 12 RNP approach was developed in 2011 and was not part of Metroplex. This RNP approach was modified in early 2016 by moving the fix HITIR approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ nautical miles to the southeast (away from Sunnyvale) and raising the altitude from 3,600 to 4,000 at HITIR.

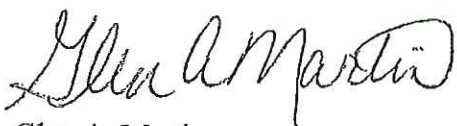
Not all aircraft fly the RNP approach into SJC and the Northern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) (NCT) does still vector many aircraft for the SJC RWY 12 RNAV or Instrument Landing System approaches. Usually these aircraft are descending to 3,000 feet on the downwind, which overflies Sunnyvale. This practice also has not changed in over 20 years and NCT is unable to keep these aircraft higher due to the conflict with other traffic, including the San Francisco final.

Weather has dictated the use of SJC South flow more heavily, recently. For September 2015 vs September 2016, 10 percent of SJC traffic landed on a South flow runway (12's). For October 2015, 2 percent of traffic landed on SJC South flow runways, while traffic in October 2016, had 33 percent of SJC traffic landing on the South flow runways. Due to this increase caused by the weather conditions, the FAA understands why the community has noticed a change.

The wind and FAA Order 7110.65 determine the active runway at SJC. In accordance with paragraph 3-5-1 of FAA Order 7110.65, when there is a tailwind of 5 knots or more, SJC Tower must utilize RWY 12. This is the least favorable configuration for both the Tower and the TRACON and it is not utilized more than is necessary. Runway changes are complicated, they increase noise due to delay vectoring and holding and more importantly, introduce risk in the National Airspace System if done too often. SJC Tower will utilize forecasted wind reports to avoid "chasing" the wind, which may result in SJC being on RWY 12 for periods when the tailwind is less than 5 knots if the wind is forecasted to remain out of the east/southeast and increase in velocity.

Thank you for this opportunity to answer your inquiry. If you have any questions, please contact me or Tamara A. Swann, Deputy Regional Administrator, at (310) 725-3550.

Sincerely,



Glen A. Martin
Regional Administrator