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County, City and Federal Agencies Approve Agreement on Metroplex Flight Paths from John Wayne Airport

County of Orange, Calif. (January 29, 2018) — The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) approved a Settlement Agreement January 19 with the City of Newport Beach and the County of Orange defining flight paths from John Wayne Airport (SNA).

Supervisor Michelle Steel, whose district includes John Wayne Airport, said, “The Orange County Board of Supervisors and the City of Newport Beach achieved a significant victory for residents with this agreement. The agreement ensures a more thorough, transparent and inclusive process that requires full environmental review for any future proposed changes to historical flight paths.”

The City of Newport Beach sued the FAA in October 2016 regarding the FAA’s environmental document associated with the FAA’s Southern California Metroplex implementation. The recent legal settlement also involves the County of Orange, which joined the action after the City filed its lawsuit.

The suit argued that the FAA’s environmental assessment was inadequate and potentially allowed routing flights across a majority of the city, from the tip of Newport Coast to the Santa Ana River, significantly changing the historical flight paths down the middle of the Upper Newport Bay.

Under the Metroplex Settlement Agreement, the FAA agreed that the Metroplex flight paths will remain between the existing SNA noise monitors. FAA agreed to monitor and provide reports to the County and City that show the flight tracks and any aircraft deviations, along with aircraft altitude information along departure locations from SNA. Additional protections were secured against excessive “early offshore turns” that, if allowed, would bring certain departures closer to Corona del Mar and Newport Coast.

The FAA also agreed to ensure all future changes to flight paths will be subject to separate environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act. The FAA agreed to follow all required processes in FAA Air Traffic Organization Community Involvement Plan and Manual, and to meet with the County and City on an as needed basis to discuss, provide input, review and comment on existing, and any proposed modifications, of flight paths that fly over Newport Beach.

“We will certainly monitor and enforce FAA compliance as the agreement states,” said Supervisor Todd Spitzer, whose Third District includes the JWA approach corridor. “Any divergence from proper flight paths, once implemented, will be stopped and legal action is now available if the FAA, airlines, or pilots continue to disrupt our communities.”



Board Chairman Andrew Do, First District Supervisor, said, “The Orange County Board of Supervisors and John Wayne Airport remain committed to operating in compliance with the 1985 Settlement Agreement and subsequent amendments which govern the JWA curfew, noise limits, and passenger capacity limits. Our goal is to operate a world-class airport while minimizing the impact to residents.”

Vice Chairman Shawn Nelson, Fourth District Supervisor, said, “I’m pleased that the decision by the Board of Supervisors to take proactive action resulted in a positive outcome for Orange County. It is especially gratifying that we were able to reach an equitable agreement without going to court.”

Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, Fifth District, said, “We are encouraged by the willingness of Federal agencies to recognize and mitigate the significant issues associated with implementation of Metroplex flight paths. We will continue to monitor and address these issues on behalf of our residents.”

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