


**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: June 30, 2015

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No: 15-0002-S69
Assignment No. 15-06-0514

SUBJECT: Resolution (Bonin – Koretz) to include in the 2015-2016 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for the FAA to adopt Metroplex procedures that seek to eliminate takeoff convergence and conflicts of primary departure flights at LAX and SMO.

CLA RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of this matter is a policy decision of the City Council. However, should the discussion broaden to consider other issues regarding the Southern California Metroplex Project, your Committee may wish to adopt the revised Resolution also attached to this report.

SUMMARY

The Resolution (Bonin – Koretz), introduced June 19, 2015, proposes SUPPORT for the FAA to adopt Metroplex procedures that seek to eliminate takeoff convergence and conflicts of primary departure flight tracks between Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and Santa Monica Municipal Airport (SMO). This is a concern because runways at LAX and SMO have a point of convergence once aircraft depart from either airport. The point of convergence is miles off the coastline, and has not resulted in any accidents to date. In solving this conflict both LAX and SMO flights on these specific runways must operate in sequence, which can cause delays in flights by initiating holding patterns where aircraft are circling for their turn to proceed, or waiting idle on the runway. This sequencing of flights has deleterious impacts on the environment from pollution, and business with scheduling delays. The Resolution (Bonin – Koretz) identifies potential health impacts from jet-fuel emissions and noise imposed on West Los Angeles residents that live within 250 feet of the SMO airport runways. In addition, it cites the increase wait time for flights from either SMO or LAX to be cleared to use the airspace. The SoCal Metroplex Project has recommended an alternative procedure that could eliminate the convergence issue between LAX and SMO by introducing degrees of lateral separation for aircraft departures at both airports. Each airport would be restricted to this designated flight path. Therefore, Resolution (Bonin – Koretz) supports the adoption of Metroplex procedures that

eliminate takeoff convergence and conflicts of between LAX and SMO. If approved, the City's official position would be to support this procedure as proposed in the So Cal Metroplex Project.

BACKGROUND

The Southern California Metroplex is a geographic area covering about 19 airports serving several major metropolitan areas, including the Los Angeles Basin. The FAA's goal is to develop a plan to optimize the airspace within the Southern California Metroplex by utilizing technology to coordinate and guide aircraft to specific predetermined flight paths to manage air traffic and airspace within the Metroplex. By upgrading from a ground-based navigation system to a satellite-based one, also called optimization, the technology will provide the FAA and participating airports more efficiency in the use of airspace, which leads to more on-time arrivals/departures, as well as reductions in fuel consumption, air emissions, and travel time. The new flight procedures, using satellite-based navigation technology offers more precision in aircraft control, but will also concentrate flights to a narrow corridor for arrivals and departures. The narrower flight path is just one procedural change that will result from optimization, with potentially hundreds of others for LAWA to implement at LAX.

The FAA prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the potential environmental impacts of the SoCal Metroplex Project, which included General Study Areas to evaluate potential impacts of changes in aircraft flight procedures. The Draft EA was released June 10, 2015, with 30 days to comment, which expires July 10, 2015. The attached alternative Resolution requests the FAA to extend the comment period to at least 90-days for additional comments regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment on the proposed Southern California Metroplex Project, and authorizes the staff of the Los Angeles World Airports Department to coordinate comprehensive comments about implementation of the Metroplex Project to the FAA. The alternative Resolution, requests that the FAA extends the comment period time to at least 90-days to allow for more comments from those potentially impacted by the Metroplex Project, and it authorizes LAWA to coordinate comments on behalf of the City and submit all appropriate concerns to the FAA for immediate consideration in their Environmental Assessment.

The FAA's tentative project schedule includes releasing the Draft Environmental Assessment and opening the public comment period for 30-days from June 10, 2015 to July 10, 2015. The purpose of the EA is to document the FAA's analysis of environmental impacts in implementing the SoCal Metroplex project. Those impacts include, in part, airport noise, aircraft noise in-flight, and aircraft emissions and pollutants. The FAA scheduled ten outreach workshops for the public to learn about the project and submit comments. There are many community stakeholder groups expressing concern that the 30-day comment period is not enough time to provide significant comments to the project, and subsequently their issues will not be addressed properly as the project proceeds. Stakeholders in the community and region along with many US Congressional representatives from California have drafted letters to federal officials at the FAA about concerns that not all impacts have been thoroughly reviewed or disclosed to the public to have such a short time frame to submit comments. Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA-43) has released a copy of a letter to the Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, dated June 18, 2015, on behalf of community stakeholders requesting that the public comment period be extended to at least 90-

days for communities to comment thoroughly the possible impacts. The letter also reiterates concern for noise levels and other impacts, especially on communities located underneath the flight paths of arriving and departing flights across surrounding airports within the So Cal Metroplex. The letter by Congresswoman Waters is co-signed by nine other Congressional Representatives, which include Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-40), Congressman Ted W. Lieu (CA-33), Congressman Scott Peters (CA-52), Congressman Juan Vargas (CA-51), Congressman Adam B. Schiff (CA-28), Congressman Alan Lowenthal (CA-47), Congresswoman Janice Hahn (CA-44), Congresswoman Norma Torres (CA-35), and Congresswoman Karen Bass (CA-37).

LAWA is not a sponsor of the Metroplex Project and has not been involved in identifying or evaluating the changes to flight procedures. Staff are monitoring the Metroplex Project as it proceeds and are engaging the FAA to release more information and data to justify assumptions on impacts to flight operations at LAX and to our regional airspace. LAWA has concerns that the optimization plan will have many procedural changes, the likes of which are not fully comprehended as currently articulated by the FAA. Other options to pursue to protect the City's interests regarding the implementation of the Metroplex Project and its impacts include the following:

- ADOPT the attached revised Resolution to include in the City's 2015-2016 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for Administrative Action by the FAA to extend of the Draft Environmental Assessment comment time frame to at least 90 days to give all interested stakeholders sufficient time to submit remarks, and
- REQUEST the Los Angeles World Airports Department to coordinate comprehensive comments, for Council review, prior to submission to the FAA on all concerns regarding the proposed Metroplex Project.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Los Angeles World Airports



Blayne Sutton-Wills
Analyst

Attachment: 1. Resolution

SMT:BSW:bsw

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to pending before a local, state or federal government body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is in the process of implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System, or NextGen, with the goal of transforming the country's air traffic control system from a ground-based navigation to a satellite-based system in order to increase efficiency and capacity, while saving time and fuel and improving aviation safety; and

WHEREAS, as part of NextGen the FAA has developed a Metroplex project with proposals to optimize the aircraft arrival and departure procedures at 19 Southern California airports, with a significant number of procedural changes designed for LAX; and

WHEREAS, the Metroplex involves changing aircraft flight paths, which under a satellite based navigation creates a precise and narrower flight path, resulting in a concentration of flights over particular areas of Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the concentration of those flights have impacts such as noise and pollution that are not fully understood for communities living underneath the potential flight paths; and

WHEREAS, the FAA has prepared and released a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to document environmental impacts and is seeking comments from the public for 30 days until July 10, 2015; and

WHEREAS, concern has been raised that the 30-day comment period for the Draft Environmental Assessment for this project does not provide a sufficient time period for affected communities and LAWA staff to comment; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) staff should have the authority to coordinate comments that relay the full complement of concerns regarding the Metroplex Project on behalf of the citizens of Los Angeles, and the FAA should be requested to extend the comment period to at least 90 days in order to give all interested stakeholders sufficient time to read, analyze and comment on the EA;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by adoption of this resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2015-16 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for Administrative Action by the FAA to extend of the Draft Environmental Assessment comment time frame to at least 90 days to give all interested stakeholders sufficient time to submit remarks, and REQUEST the Los Angeles World Airports Department to coordinate comprehensive comments, for Council review, prior to submission to the FAA on all concerns regarding the proposed Metroplex Project.