

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: February 25, 2020

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

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No.: 20-0078
Assignment No.: 20-02-0133

SUBJECT: Implementing Area Navigation (RNAV) Procedures for ELMOO NINE Departures Leaving Hollywood Burbank Airport

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached revised Resolution to include in the City's 2019-2020 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for any legislation or administrative action to explore the feasibility of implementing satellite-based (RNAV) departure procedures for flights out of Hollywood Burbank Airport using the ELMOO NINE flight path in order to disperse departing flights more evenly throughout the region's airspace.

SUMMARY

Flight departure procedures are Federal Aviation Administration-approved and -published instructions that pilots follow in order to navigate from an airport runway to their in-air route. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is currently in the process of conducting an Environmental Assessment of proposed amendments to two existing departure procedures at Hollywood Burbank Airport. The departure procedures being evaluated, OROSZ TWO and SLAPP ONE, currently follow Area Navigation (RNAV) procedures which utilize satellite technology. The amended departure procedures, OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO, if implemented, would follow satellite-determined routes that would concentrate flights on a very specific path. Both the existing and proposed OROSZ and SLAPP departure procedures direct flights westward over City neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley region.

A separate, existing flight departure procedure at Hollywood Burbank Airport, ELMOO NINE, directs flights eastward over the San Gabriel Valley; however, ELMOO NINE uses conventional departure procedures, rather than satellite-based procedures, that require air traffic controllers to radio directions to planes. Per Resolution (Krekorian – Ryu – Koretz), introduced on January 22, 2020, because the ELMOO NINE departure procedure does not use RNAV procedures it is not regularly used by air traffic controllers.

According to the Resolution, if ELMOO NINE was amended to use RNAV procedures it would likely be used more frequently, which would allow for departing flights to be more evenly distributed in the region. Therefore the attached revised Resolution seeks an official position of the City to support any legislation or administrative action that would explore the feasibility of implementing RNAV departure procedures for flights out of Hollywood Burbank Airport using the ELMOO NINE flight path to reduce the amount of air traffic flying over the San Fernando Valley region.

BACKGROUND

As part of the FAA's Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) Initiative, the FAA introduced new flight paths and procedures for flights in and out of the airports in Southern California and began implementing them in March 2017. The NextGen program is intended to modernize air traffic control and flight routing, using newer technologies and airspace procedures, including satellite-based routing.

Prior to NextGen implementation, departures from Hollywood Burbank Airport followed more conventional departure procedures with published compass headings and altitude directions and radar vectoring given by air flight controllers after the initial take-off, resulting in a wide dispersal of flight paths. The new departures implemented under NextGen use RNAV procedures, which rely on satellite-based navigation equipment and likely resulted in more concentrated flight paths out of the airport.

Multiple lawsuits were filed against the FAA over the NextGen program and the FAA settled one of these lawsuits with a homeowners association relative to the OROSZ TWO and SLAPP ONE routes at Hollywood Burbank Airport. As part of the settlement, and in conjunction with new FAA regulations regarding departure procedures, the FAA developed the proposed OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO routes, which would significantly concentrate departing air traffic along a satellite-defined flight path.

The existing OROSZ TWO and SLAPP ONE departure procedures, which the FAA is proposing be amended, use RNAV methods. RNAV procedures require less radio correspondence between pilots and air traffic control and is often a more favored departure procedure. ELMOO NINE, however, uses conventional departure procedures. The existing ELMOO waypoint is located above the City of San Gabriel in the San Gabriel Valley, to the east of Hollywood Burbank Airport. Both the existing and the proposed OROSZ and SLAPP departures direct planes westerly upon their initial departure. Because ELMOO NINE does not use RNAV procedures, the majority of flights departing Hollywood Burbank Airport are directed westerly.

The FAA's Draft Environmental Review for the proposed OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO procedures determined that the two departures would be Categorically Excluded under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. A Categorical Exclusion determination indicates that the FAA had determined that neither an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement were necessary for the proposed routes as they would not have individually or cumulatively had a significant effect on the human environment.

This Council opposed the proposed OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO departure procedures and opposed the FAA Draft Environmental Review's determination that routes were a Categorical Exclusion under NEPA. This Council also supported the use of dispersal headings or other lateral track variations for any new departure procedures implemented at Hollywood Burbank Airport, so that flight paths would be dispersed over a wider area instead of consolidating flights along a satellite-determined route.

In March 2019, after receiving significant public input, the FAA announced it would conduct an Environmental Assessment of the proposed OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO departure procedures. The FAA is currently in the process of conducting this assessment.

Since the FAA announced it would conduct an Environmental Assessment of the two proposed departure procedures, the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority, owner and operator of the Hollywood Burbank Airport, and Los Angeles World Airports have jointly formed a Noise Task Force. The task force has held multiple community meetings to receive input from residents and stakeholders and evaluate potential mitigation measures in order to provide recommendations to the FAA relative to the existing and proposed departure and arrival procedures at Hollywood Burbank Airport. Council Districts 2, 4, 5, and 6 are voting members of the task force.



Matthew Shade
Analyst

Attachments: 1. Revised Resolution

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental 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, aircraft noise from flights arriving at and departing from the Hollywood Burbank Airport severely and disproportionately impacts the people of the East San Fernando Valley within the City of Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress has mandated the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to implement the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) to ensure that we have the safest, most efficient airspace system possible today and for generations of air travelers to come by using the most accurate and modern Global Navigation Satellite Systems available; and

WHEREAS, the full implementation of NextGen would require that airspace procedures be standardized across the country to accomplish this congressional mandate; and

WHEREAS, the FAA has approved various take-off procedures for the runway configurations at Hollywood Burbank Airport; and

WHEREAS, Area Navigation (RNAV) is a method of navigation which uses satellite technology to navigate a flight path using a series of waypoints; and

WHEREAS, the FAA-approved ELMOO NINE departure procedure at Hollywood Burbank Airport is not an RNAV procedure and is consequently not used by air traffic controllers as often as other departure procedures; and

WHEREAS, greater use of the ELMOO NINE departure procedure would relieve the substantial air traffic over the East San Fernando Valley by routing planes eastward, more evenly distributing flight impacts between the San Fernando Valley and the Arroyo-Verdugo areas; and

WHEREAS, the FAA is currently conducting an Environmental Assessment for two proposed departure procedures at Hollywood Burbank Airport, OROSZ THREE and SLAPP TWO, and this environmental analysis could include updating the ELMOO NINE departure procedure to use RNAV procedures to increase its use;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2019-2020 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for any legislation or administrative action to explore the feasibility of implementing satellite-based (RNAV) departure procedures for flights out of Hollywood Burbank Airport using the ELMOO NINE flight path in order to disperse departing flights more evenly throughout the region's airspace.