



# CITY OF CULVER CITY

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February 17, 2015

The Honorable Karen Bass  
United States House of Representatives  
4929 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 650  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

**Subject: Impacts of the Los Angeles International Airport on Culver City**

Dear Congressperson Bass:

Thank you very much for taking the opportunity to meet with Councilmember Jim B. Clarke, City Council-Appointed City Representative and Alternate to the FAA Noise Roundtable, June Lehrman and Stephen Murray; City Attorney Carol Schwab; and myself. Attached, please find a copy of a letter prepared by Ms. Lehrman, which articulates her concerns about overflights and noise impacts from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) air traffic. As a result of concerns from many residents and business owners, the City will be holding a community meeting to address concerns regarding overflights, noise and other impacts, next Tuesday, February 24, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

In addition, the City of Culver City has been concerned about the impacts of the LAX expansion for many years. While the City completely supports the upgrade and modernization of LAX, the community is concerned about the impacts of the expansion on the City and region's overflights, noise, traffic, transit and air quality. Although we have requested that Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) address these matters, they have not agreed to provide appropriate mitigation.

I hope that we can collaborate on ways to address Culver City's concerns during future discussions with LAWA and the Federal Aviation Administration. Thank you again for taking the time to hear the City's issues. We look forward to remaining connected with you and your staff regarding this important topic of mutual concern.

Sincerely,

Meghan Sahli-Wells  
Mayor

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Members of the City Council  
John M. Nachbar, City Manager  
Carol A. Schwab, City Attorney  
June Lehrman, City Representative to the FAA Noise Roundtable  
Stephen Murray, Alternate City Representative to the FAA Noise Roundtable

February 11, 2015

Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells and Council Member Jim Clarke  
City of Culver City  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232

RE: LAX Overflights and Noise Impacts

Mayor Sahli-Wells and Council Member Clarke:

As the City Council-appointed representatives to the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) Community Noise Roundtable, we are writing in anticipation of the meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 with you and Congressman Karen Bass. At that meeting we hope to encourage her participation in Federal Aviation Administration issues concerning LAX, and the impact the high volume of airspace use has on the surrounding communities under the “north downwind approach” which traverses a substantial part of her District (*see* enclosed map). Preliminary analysis from an air traffic expert, hired as a City consultant to evaluate Los Angeles World Airport (LAWA)<sup>1</sup> data, shows that there has been an increase in the number of aircraft flying at decreased altitudes compared to previous years.

#### **Background on Airspace Re-design Concerns**

Aircraft arriving at LAX from the west and north use an easterly downwind approach that results in aircraft flying over communities in the Congressman's District at increasingly lower altitudes.

The Standard Terminal Arrival Procedure (STAR) for aircraft from the west and north is to route them over the Santa Monica Airport VOR<sup>2</sup> above 7000 feet. Aircraft then drop altitude and veer easterly toward a U-turn east of the 110. They then join with westerly flights to make their final descent into LAX. This is called a downwind approach, and portions of Culver City, Jefferson and the Crenshaw neighborhoods are in this flight path. Recently, we have experienced dramatic increases in overflight noise which we believe are the result of changes to flight paths and/or decreasing altitude. The large number of flights and the narrow flight path over Culver City also raise concerns about health impacts from exposure to elevated concentrations of ultrafine particulate and gaseous emissions.

*Overflight noise has increased dramatically since 2012, in part from higher traffic volume, lower flight altitudes and descent procedures. Not only Culver City but other portions of the Congressman's District, including Baldwin Hills, Ladera Heights and Leimert Park, are directly affected.*

The FAA is in the process of re-designing airspace nationwide, as part of its “Nextgen” initiative, including the final phases of its Southern California “Optimization of Airspace Procedures in the Metroplex” (OAPM)<sup>3</sup>. OAPM aims to streamline airport procedures but can have dramatic unintended consequences for those living underneath new or altered flight paths. These negative consequences are

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) is the owner and operator of LAX.

<sup>2</sup> VHF Omnidirectional Range (VOR) is a ground-based radio navigational aid. Lines between them, called Victor airways, are the primary instrument flight paths throughout the country.

<sup>3</sup> NextGen is a movement away from VOR navigation aids to satellite-guided GPS navigation.

already being experienced by residents in Phoenix, Arizona, Park Slope Brooklyn, Palo Alto, and other cities nationwide.

*In 2012 Congress's FAA Modernization and Reform Act (Pub. Law 112-95) fast-tracked the roll out of NextGen by exempting it from normal environmental impact reviews and public hearings.*

We would like the FAA to provide transparency, and include community concerns, in the design of new arrival and departure procedures including the Southern California OAPM. Currently, the FAA re-designs the airspace with input from industry representatives but with the community having no input until after flight paths have *already been locked down*. This has recently occurred at the Environmental Assessment for San Francisco Airport where all 428 public comments were determined to have a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (*see [http://oapmenvironmental.com/norcal\\_metroplex/norcal\\_public\\_input.html](http://oapmenvironmental.com/norcal_metroplex/norcal_public_input.html)*.)

The Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, which rolled out NextGen approach paths in September, demonstrates an even bleaker result. In September of 2014 the FAA rolled out new flight plans. In the 4 months since more than 3300 noise complaints have been filed. There were 221 noise complaints for the entire year of 2013. (*see <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2014/10/17/faa-will-study-solution-flight-path-noise/17399667/>*)

We would like to invite the Congressman to:

1. Join the congressional Quiet Skies Caucus formed by Reps. Steve Israel and 13 other members including CA members Adam Schiff, Anna Eshoo, and former Congressman Henry Waxman. The purpose of the caucus is to "raise awareness on the issue of aircraft noise and work to find meaningful solutions to the problem by pressuring the FAA, airport authorities and others to address the concerns of residents."

2. Support efforts to lower the noise level threshold around airports from the current level of 65 DNL<sup>4</sup> to a lower 55 DNL to be more compatible with residential areas. This has been suggested in a letter by 24 Congressmembers including California representatives Judy Chu, Anna Eshoo, Michael Honda, Zoe Lofgren, Jackie Speier, Maxine Waters, and Henry Waxman. (*see [http://meng.house.gov/sites/meng.house.gov/files/wysiwyg\\_uploaded/Letter%20to%20FAA.pdf](http://meng.house.gov/sites/meng.house.gov/files/wysiwyg_uploaded/Letter%20to%20FAA.pdf)*)

3. Attempt to introduce greater transparency and community involvement into the design of the FAA's ongoing SoCal OAPM. Since OAPM/NextGen involves objectives similar to a comprehensive airspace redesign, we feel this is an appropriate time to suggest options to the FAA that may help reduce noise and pollution impact on communities that are under LAX's north downwind approach.

4. Request that LAWA support and attempt to increase the minimum altitude as much as possible for aircraft on the downwind leg; explore options to reduce the concentration of aircraft along the narrow downwind approach flight path; and explore options of moving the approach path off the Santa Monica Airport VOR to points that have less impact on residential areas, such as possibly along the Santa Monica Freeway corridor.

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<sup>4</sup> "DNL" stands for "Decibel Day-Night Average Sound Level" and involves weighted average of noise over a 24-hour period.

Every several years, Congress is required to enact legislation to authorize funding and set policy priorities for the FAA. The FAA Reauthorization & Reform Act of 2012 expires at the end of fiscal year 2015. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leaders scheduled their first hearing on re-authorization in late January in anticipation of the September deadline. Therefore now may be a good time to raise these concerns.

Thank you

June Lehrman  
Representative to LAX/Community Noise Roundtable

Stephen Murray  
Alternate Representative to LAX/Community Noise Roundtable

cc: Culver City City Council  
John Nachbar, City Manager



