



City Council Report

City Council Meeting: June 26, 2012

Agenda Item: 8-D

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Martin Pastucha, Director of Public Works
Subject: Flight Training Reduction Incentive Test Program

Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Approve a six-month voluntary flight training reduction incentive test program at Santa Monica Airport in a not to exceed amount of \$90,000 to reimburse flight schools who conduct repetitive takeoff and landing practice at other area airports during weekends and federal holidays only.
2. Appropriate the budget increases as outlined in the Financial Impacts and Budget Actions section of this report.

Executive Summary

The proposed voluntary flight training reduction incentive test program is designed to reimburse flight schools who conduct repetitive takeoff and landing practice at other area airports that would have normally occurred at Santa Monica Airport. This program would reduce the noise impact associated with repetitive aircraft operations during weekends and holidays. Flight schools participating in the program would receive \$150.00 per eligible flight, which would result in one takeoff and landing at Santa Monica Airport with the repetitive operations occurring elsewhere. It is anticipated that the test program would effectively reduce the number of repetitive takeoffs and landings during the test period. The incentive program would begin on July 1, 2012 and terminate on December 31, 2012 unless otherwise modified by the City.

Background

Currently, about 40% of Santa Monica Airport's traffic is considered local flights. Local flights are those operations performed by aircraft that remain in the local traffic pattern or the designated controlled airspace for the airport, generally within 5 nautical miles of the Airport. Many of these operations are repetitive takeoffs and landings being performed as part of pilot flight training. Airport staff receives numerous noise complaints from residents

regarding these repetitive types of local operations especially during weekends and holidays when most people are at home. The impact of the noise from these operations is more disruptive because it is a constant presence in the area, even though the volume fluctuates.

During the [May 8, 2012](#) City Council meeting, Council heard a series of staff recommendations to reduce the operational impacts of Santa Monica Airport. One of these recommendations proposed reducing flight school operations through a reimbursement program by moving a portion of their operations to airports better suited to accommodate patterned flying. As a result, staff developed a six-month voluntary test program designed to offset the cost of traveling to another airport for local flight schools to encourage their flight instructors to perform repetitive takeoff and landing practice at other airports, thereby reducing the noise impacts on local residential areas.

Discussion

Reimbursement for this proposed program would be for the time to and from other airports for the practicing of repetitive takeoff and landings. Only Santa Monica Airport based flight schools would be eligible to participate in the program. Reimbursement would be limited to dual flight instruction repetitive takeoff and landing training flights conducted at other airports. A qualified flight instructor must be an employee of an eligible flight school. A minimum of four takeoffs and four landings must be conducted at other airports to qualify for the reimbursement. The funding level proposed by staff would encourage a maximum of 600 training flights to use other area airports. This represents a potential reduction of up to 4,800 takeoffs and landings on weekends and holidays during the six-month test period.

To be reimbursed for a given flight, a flight instructor must complete and sign a reimbursement request form cosigned by the student pilot. The flight instructor must include a photocopy of the page in the student's log book indicating the appropriate entry with the date and time of the flight, route of flight, airport used, and number of repetitive takeoffs and landings performed at that airport. The log book entry must contain the signature of the authorized flight instructor. The use of the log book is important because it is the pilot's

official record of flight operation recognized by the FAA. To falsify a log book is a violation of FAA rules.

Airport staff would use various flight tracking systems and data to monitor compliance with the program. Staff would also rely upon the student logbook entry to verify that the flight fully complied with the requirements of the program and that the requisite number of repetitive takeoffs and landings at other airports were practiced.

Staff met with the flights schools on May 15, 2012 to present and discuss the proposed Flight Training Reduction Incentive Test Program that would apply to flights during weekends and federal holidays. The flight schools were very supportive of the program and concurred with staff that it would reduce the number of repetitive takeoffs and landings thus reducing the noise and nuisance impact of these operations during weekends and federal holidays - the most noise sensitive days of the week.

The City would reserve the right to terminate the program at any time by giving a 10-day notice to the flight schools. At the end of the test period, staff will analyze the results of the program and report back to the City Council on the effectiveness of the program in reducing local flights with a recommendation regarding the continued operation of the program.

In an additional attempt to further reduce the noise impacts of Airport operations, staff's preliminary research based on a community member suggestion has identified another potential opportunity for aircraft to be fitted with an exhaust silencer to reduce exhaust noise. After contacting several United States and European aircraft exhaust system manufacturers as well as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to locate a system that holds a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) issued by the FAA approving the product for use, one aircraft exhaust silencer company was found in Germany. The FAA STC was issued to Gomolzig Flugzeug- und Maschinenbau GmbH. Staff contacted Gomolzig and found that the noise reduction from their silencer varied between 2.3 dBA to 6.3 dBA depending on the type of propeller installed on the aircraft.

At the Santa Monica Airport, the single engine Cessna 172 is the most popular aircraft used by flight schools. Cessna does not manufacture such systems nor does it approve their installation. Staff did find a second German company, Liese-Flugtechnik, who is an exhaust silencer manufacturer that holds several FAA STC's none of which are for the Cessna 172. Although this company markets silencers in Europe for the Cessna 172, they only have approvals from German and European authorities and do not wish to pursue FAA STC certification. They cited product liability insurance costs (which increase by a factor of 10 in the United States market), limited demand, and lack of approval from aircraft and engine manufacturers.

Furthermore, to determine the effectiveness of aircraft exhaust silencer products more investigation is required. The noise reduction claims can vary from 3 dBA with no discernible reduction to 10 dBA with a mildly noticeable reduction in noise. Staff will continue to investigate the viability of this technology and will report back to Council on findings and program viability. In addition, these efforts will be discussed throughout the Phase III Visioning effort along with follow-ups on the effectiveness of the proposed Flight Reduction Incentive Test Program.

Commission Review

The proposed Flight Training Reduction Incentive Test Program is on the Airport Commission agenda for June 25, 2012 for review and comment.

Financial Impacts and Budget Actions

The Flight Training Reduction Incentive Test Program will cost \$90,000. Implementation of this program requires an appropriation of \$90,000 for FY 2012-13 from the General Fund to account 01401.555219.

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Approved: _____

Forwarded to Council: _____

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