

San Diego International Airport (SDIA) UPDATE

By *Suhail Khalil* – Peninsula Community Planning Board Airport Committee Chair

Overview:

In 2006 SDIA operations managed over 50,000 passengers per day, approximately 17,600,000 passengers annually. As of today, SDIA is averaging ONE OPERATION “take off” or “landing” every 94 seconds OR 650 OPS/DAY between the hours of 6:30am – 11:30pm. This amount of traffic places tremendous pressures on all systems and requires operations to be incredibly efficient.

ASSEMBLY BILL 93 ESTABLISHED THE **San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA)** AWAY FROM OPERATIONS OF THE PORT AUTHORITY FOR SDIA IN 2001. ***“The primary reason of forming the Airport Authority was to identify a site for a new international airport. The legislation was authored by Steve Peace, who argued that San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) as the Airport Land Use Commission and the Port District as the operator of Lindbergh Field would continue to be unsuccessful in their effort to find a new airport site. Mr. Peace felt that a new organizational structure, separate from both, would have greater authority to succeed.”*** Through a regional restructuring of agencies in 2002, the **San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA)** was created to manage operations at SDIA/Lindbergh Field on JANUARY 1, 2003 and to DEVELOP land use compatibility around (16) airports INCLUDING THE 4 MILITARY AIRPORTS countywide. Previously the Lindbergh Field was operated by the San Diego Unified Port District due to its location on state tidelands. SDCRAA ORGANIZATION MAY CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF PENDING SENATE BILL # 10 BY CHRISTINE KEHOE. The purpose of the Kehoe Bill is to change the makeup of the Airport Authority Board to make them more accountable to the local communities.

SDCRAA is currently working on an **Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP)**. The next ALUCP update will identify what types of land use are appropriate in the vicinity of the airports considering four main factors; Safety Zones, Noise Zones, Over Flights (flight tracks) and Air Space Protections, pursuant to FAA regulations and guidelines published in CALTRANS Airport Handbook (update 2002) as its basis. THERE ARE OTHER MAJOR ELEMENTS REGARDING AIRPORT LAND USE REFERENCED IN ASSEMBLY BILL 93. The ALUCP serve as the official document for the Airport Authority and local jurisdictions to review land use applications for airport impacts. They have no direct bearing on establishing operational policies at the airport

The **Airport Technical Advisory Group (ATAG)** and **Airport Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC)** was formed as a result of local jurisdictions and stakeholders strongly voicing their opposition to SDCRAA staff when they tried to approve previous ALUCP in 2005 with minimal responsiveness to concerns that had been raised by the surrounding communities. SDCRAA Board directed staff to start fresh with an emphasis on public outreach and responsiveness to public concerns.-ANAC has had very little impact on reducing the noise impacting our community. ANAC’s primary function is to disseminate information to ensure community planning groups, such as PCPB, is represented and may provide

community input on all substantive matters of concern. ATAG addresses land use and safety matters, while ANAC addresses noise, over flights and curfew matters. ANAC is in place due to Title 21 Variance, and the Port/SDCRAA has always dragged their feet on implementing anything from this committee. It's been revamped a couple of times to be a bone thrown in on Variance resolution. They added a "facilitator" and that allows SDCRAA to appear to have someone unbiased running the show, but the facilitator knows when to cut people off and is clearly perceived as pro Port/SDCRAA. Both subcommittees were formed to ensure information and updates are transparent for surrounding landowners, community groups, civic leaders, city and county agencies, military, aviation advisors, politics and airport operators at each of the 15 San Diego County airports.

Issues:

Master Plan

SDIA is now proposing the expansion of Terminal 2 by 10 additional gates. This capital improvement project is overdue and will relieve immediate pressures on operations. Adding 10 new gates may lessen future curfew violations that are due to operational type delays. Depending on what's driving the delay. If the problem is on the taxiway rather than at the gates, then curfew violations could be exacerbated. The proposed improvement plans includes a large parking structure adjacent to ten (10) new gates to be constructed at Terminal 2, which will increase traffic on Harbor Drive. In order to commence public awareness about this project now, a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the adjacent land located at the former NTC Landfill Remediation Project is now available and the new EIR for the Master Plan will be available this month for public review. Copies of the draft EIR's may be downloaded at www.san.org under "Environmental Review/CEQA. Deadline for receiving written comments regarding adequacy of draft EIR are posted.

The Master Plan includes additional improvements intended to provide capacity and reduce delays for air travelers. ***"Unlike other airports, there have been no problems with new airlines entering SDIA. Airlines will find a way to add flights within their current gate facilities or work deals out with other carriers. It just gets congested without new gates and congestion can negatively affect safety."***

The problem that I can see happening with the Master Plan is that with more gates airlines will tend to peak their flights to desired times. If there is a crunch on gates, the airlines will add flights when the gates are unoccupied, smoothing out the day's operation.

SDIA is a single runway airport and does not have the same runway incursion problems at LAX and other airports. While departures and arrivals share a single runway, the controllers are focused on the single runway and are only covering that single runway instead of two or more. SDIA does have problems and a crash is more likely here than at "better" airports, but I feel the increase in crash potential will likely increase at the rate of flight increases, not at some accelerated pace. However, "go-arounds" will increase at a higher rate as controllers will not have as many holes in Runway 27's use. If flights were added noise will increase, but I don't see terminals and gates being the limiting factor at SDIA - the runway is the limiting factor and growth is based on the economy, San

Diego's growth and other factors. As ground traffic nears capacity levels, small increases in volume will result in large increases in conflict potential.

Curfew violations should not be impacted by adding gates. However, if SDIA does not add gates, airlines will spread their operations out, which could actually increase the possibility of curfew violations as gate congestion and flights being scheduled later in the day may become curfew problems. The more gates SDIA has, the less congestion there would be approaching the curfew hours, with the rare exception of days with severe weather delays.

Land Use

Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) policies are advisory to city and county land use agencies. This policy documents must be adhered to by local jurisdictions unless their legislative body overrides the policies on a project by project basis after making required findings. Airports are comprised of four categories in San Diego County; "rural", "-urban", "military" and "SDIA". The ALUCP is specific to each airport. Airport Influence Areas for airports may overlap creating additional complexity.

Previously PCPB has had strong differences of opinions with SDCRAA policy. *"PCPB must not lose credibility with SDCRAA and ATAG due to differences, -comments or actions."* At the last SDIA subcommittee meeting I attended on August 20th, counsel for SDIA responded to a public comment made by a Peninsula resident *"I suppose we will just have to agree to disagree"* after the comment was made regarding the need for Avigation Easement. The meeting continued refocusing on Avigation Easement triggers. Next ATAG meeting scheduled for 9/24/07 will address the "safety overlay". If this overlay is anything like the one proposed for Gillespie Field, it will result in the potential loss of tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars in lost property value.

Quieter Home Program

The biggest concern to address now is the "Avigation Easement". FAA allocates between 6-8 million dollars annually through federal earmarked funds to mitigate noise around SDIA arrival and departure corridors. SDIA also contributes with a variance set at 20% of earmarked funds, capped at \$2million. The total contribution to QHP in 2007 is \$10million. FAA does not oversee SDIA's distribution of these funds or implementation of retrofit projects. FAA does not require any sort of "quid-pro-quo" from property owners, if they choose to participate in this program. Therefore, there must be widespread community acceptance of what should trigger an Avigation Easement if it is to be used to entice participation. Everyone now wonders why SDCRAA has lagged behind on the Quieter Home Program vs. other airports. I don't think they are doing anything except moving forward to catch up. The program took a while to get off the ground and is now more efficient. The Quiet Home program is an appropriate use of a quid pro quo. The Airport pays for improvements to your home to reduce interior noise levels to 45 dB. In return, you provide them with an avigation easement so that your property no longer shows up on the incompatible side of their ledger. The questionable quid pro quo is when someone under ministerial permit adds a new dwelling unit or expands non-residential use and is required to provide an avigation

easement. No one knows how long it will take for the Quiet Home program to mitigate all homes within the 65+ dB contour given the current level of funding.

Operations & Noise

There have been rumors in our community regarding a second runway and departure profiles fanning out at SDIA, which would increase flights blanketing the entire Peninsula. I've been a resident on the Peninsula for the past ten years. I've met with SDCRAA executive board members, director of airport noise mitigation, airport planning staff, and District 12 councilmen Kevin Faulconer regarding this matter. None of these rumors are true. I attended the Curfew Violation Review Panel on 9/5/07 and saw first hand data (in real time) departure and arrivals. There are two primary departure corridors at SDIA, which have been decreasing in size due to new "precision departure procedures". Thanks to the leadership of Dan Frazee and Lance Murphy with the ANAC team for spearheading this valuable system that has also decreased "early turn" incidences.

More time now needs to be spent trying to get airlines to remove their MD80 aircraft if reducing noise. There are Stage 4 kits for MD80 aircraft and I believe working with the other California Airports that have an abundance of airlines flying MD80's could work to pressure airlines to remove these aircraft from California or install Stage 4 retrofit kits.

Regarding departure paths, I see no reason for the SDCRAA/FAA to add more paths than they have today. The 275 and 290 allow two closely spaced aircraft to depart. I have seen the 250 heading, but it's used for really slow movers like FedEx props going to Imperial Valley. The only other time the 250 is used is for aircraft executing a missed approach (go around). There are other issues with heavy jet departures when extra spacing is needed and the time necessary between flights would have nothing to do with additional heading paths. We have to keep on top of SDCRAA/FAA actions to ensure they are not going to develop something radically different in the future.

Infrastructure & Traffic

CALTRANS and SANDAG are the agencies providing our city with feasibility studies regarding new infrastructures and traffic mitigation. Current proposals include transforming the existing Port of San Diego's General Dynamic's building on Pacific Coast Highway at Washington into a new Transit Center. This proposal will require major improvement plans to complete new off/on ramps at PCH from I-5fwy and networking all mass transit systems including bus, trolley, new terminal rail, etc. These plans are liquid today. Because plans are under consideration, we must open dialogue immediately and ask poignant questions directly to SDCRAA.

Conclusion & Resolution:

The Airport Land Use Commission has adopted a new four-layer approach to land use compatibility planning (rather than previous composite approach). This will allow ATAG to effectively differentiate SDIA's unique circumstances from all other airports countywide. ATAG

is intended to involve the stakeholders during the development of the 'newly constructed' 4-layer approach to Land Use Planning for 16 airports countywide. On completion of the final ALUCP the existing need for ATAG will be eliminated.

PCPB must maintain a broad-based stakeholder position to ensure credibility and have our input heard and incorporated into SDCRAA's Master Plans. This new direction will assure PCPB's input will have a big impact on revising and improving new ALUCP's and future proposed Capital Improvement Projects. I truly appreciate Lance Murphy's technical advice and Paul Grime's insight regarding the going concerns on SDIA matters affecting our community. Lance's presentation and passionate plea to the SDCRAA Board on 9/6/07 was commendable. I look forward to working together as a team with Lance and Paul on behalf of our community in the future.

PCPB Airport Committee will be conducting a meeting September 12, 2007 on campus at Point Loma Nazarene University 6:00pm – 7:30pm to present overview of SDIA Master Plan and introduce SDCRAA, SDIA, ATAG, and ANAC officials. Please look for future meeting notices and agendas at: <http://www.pcpb.net/airport.html> and posted at Point Loma Library.