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Contact: Steven Shultz sshultz@san.org 619.400.2881
Sharie Shipley sshipley@san.org 619.400.2882

Airport Land Use Commission makes safety & economic impact priorities for Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans

SAN DIEGO — September 9, 2008 — The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority's Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) on September 4, 2008, moved a step closer to completing Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs) for the five urban airports in San Diego County: Brown Field, Gillespie Field, McClellan-Palomar Airport, Montgomery Field and Oceanside Municipal Airport. These plans provide guidance for property owners and local jurisdictions in determining appropriate land development around airport facilities.

The ALUC held a workshop and meeting on September 4 to provide policy direction on several key safety issues that are integral to the development of the ALUCPs. These issues included the density of future residential development and the intensity of future non-residential development that would be allowed near airports.

The primary purposes of ALUCPs are to enhance safety in the vicinity of airports and to protect people and property on the ground and people and aircraft in the air. ALUCPs also protect airports from encroachment by future incompatible development that could restrict aircraft operations. Airports in San Diego County are economic engines and must be protected from encroachment to remain viable.

To facilitate public participation in the development of the ALUCPs throughout the region, the Airport Authority formed the ALUCP Technical Advisory Group (ATAG), which is comprised of a broad base of more than 50 stakeholders actively engaged in the ALUCP outreach and feedback process. In December 2006, through this collaborative process, the ALUC adopted ALUCPs for the rural airports of Agua Caliente, Borrego Valley, Fallbrook, Jacumba, Ocotillo and Ramona.

The ATAG has also reached consensus regarding most of the compatibility planning issues related to urban airports in the county. For those issues where varying viewpoints existed, Airport Authority staff asked the Airport Land Use Commission to provide direction.

“I’m pleased that the Commission stayed focused on safety when providing staff with direction on these important issues,” said Rick Beach, a pilot and member of the ATAG. “The airports in question are busy, urban airports, and we need to create plans that will protect people and protect airport operations.”

While some who participated in last week’s meeting expressed concern over the possible economic impact of limiting development in certain areas, they were reminded that protecting people and property is important to the economic health of the region and the primary responsibility of the ALUC.

“Our airports are vital economic engines,” said ALUC Commissioner Ramona Finnila. “Airports attract businesses and create jobs, and it is important that we don’t do anything that will negatively impact their operations. When the safety of an airport is maintained, that airport tends to be very attractive to quality development projects.”

The ALUC will continue the discussion about the ALUCPs for the five urban airports at its public meeting on October 2, 2008. Once plans are drafted, they will undergo a thorough environmental review before being considered for adoption by the ALUC.

The California State Legislature established the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Board as the ALUC for San Diego County in 2003. The Airport Authority Board consists of members appointed from throughout the county. The ALUC has two primary responsibilities:

- 1) To prepare, adopt and update as necessary ALUCPs for each public-use and military airport within its jurisdiction of San Diego County.
- 2) To review local agency land use action to ensure that proposed new development is consistent with adopted ALUCPs.

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority was established by state law in 2003 to operate San Diego International Airport and to address the region’s long-term air transportation needs. San Diego International Airport — funded through user fees and not local taxes — served some 18.3 million passengers in 2007 and generates some \$10 billion in annual economic impact for the region.