

Airport noise spurs plea for state audit

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Tired of watching planes from Lindbergh Field fly over areas of the Peninsula they previously didn't encroach upon, the Peninsula Community Planning Board (PCPB) has called for a state audit of the airport and its operations. The PCPB sent a request to the California State Auditor's Office last month and is currently working with Sen. Christine Kehoe to see the process through.

"This audit is way overdue," said Suhail Khalil, co-chair of PCPB's Airport Subcommittee. "It's time to open everyone's eyes up and make this transparent, and show them what they've been doing for the past 10 years, as operations increased to between 20,000 and 30,000 [flights] annually since the last time the state auditor audited in 2000."

The PCPB's request involves the contentious issue of planes flying outside Lindbergh Field's standard departure headings of 290 and 275 degrees. Khalil said air traffic controllers at the airport are initiating a majority of the non-standard flights.

"We want to set the boundaries as they are written for noise mitigation that are clearly identified by FAA [the Federal Aviation Administration]," Khalil said.

Originally used as a response to construction on Taxiway C last summer, Khalil said the temporary 250-degree heading — which takes flight paths over Dana Middle, Silvergate Elementary and Warren Walker schools — is still being used regularly. He said this presents a safety issue for Peninsula residents.

"The threshold on the arrival has gotten to be so contentious that we've documented over a dozen missed-approach flights that are dangerously coming in and having to be diverted quickly to vectors south of the 250, and flying at very low levels that literally skim 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the rooftops of our homes," Khalil said. That's not acceptable."

In the past year, PCPB Airport Subcommittee members have met with Kehoe, Congresswoman Susan Davis, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority and the FAA to discuss the issue. Seeing no improvements during that time, Khalil and the board decided to go to the state level.

"It's time to figure out if these operations are to the point where the airport influence area cannot be compatible to the point where it's unsafe and it's adversely affecting everything around it environmentally," Khalil said.

With the request in place, Khalil said the next step is for Kehoe to bring it before the state Audit Committee, which would then engage the state auditor. He said he has been in contact with Kehoe's office and hopes a representative will be at the Airport Subcommittee meeting at Liberty Station on Sept. 13 from noon to 1:30 p.m. at 2495 Truxtun Road, Suite 206.

Airport Authority officials said they plan to cooperate with the state.

"We are aware that the PCPB is making this request," said Airport Authority

public relations specialist Katie Jones. “As a transparent agency, the Airport Authority would of course fully cooperate with the state should an audit occur.”

Khalil said the airport subcommittee plans to address the state audit at the Sept. 16 PCPB meeting.

For more information, visit www.pcpb.net/airport.html.

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