



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Western-Pacific Region
Office of the Regional Administrator

15000 Aviation Blvd.
Lawndale, CA 90261

MAY 30 2017

The Honorable Ro Khanna
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
District Office
900 Lafayette Street, #206
Santa Clara, CA 9050

Dear Congressman Khanna:

Thank you for your April 18, 2017, letter and for sharing your two requests. First, I understand you would appreciate having the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) help San Jose International Airport (SJC) develop modified procedures that result in decreased noise for residential properties under the current south flow procedure. Second, you have asked the FAA to “participate in a public event where citizens can learn the details of the issue and what is being done about it.”

Consistent with its statutory mission, the FAA continues to work to ensure the safe and efficient use of our national airspace system. The Northern California airspace is very complex, with traffic from several major airports, smaller regional airports and military activity. All arrival and departure procedures within the Northern California airspace are interconnected, interdependent and were designed to improve safety and efficiency within the National Airspace System (NAS). While safety remains the FAA’s highest priority, the agency does, however, attempt to address noise impacts by designing procedures over water and industrial areas when safety and efficiency permit. The FAA is also mindful, while changes to a procedure may solve a noise issue in one area; a change may simply shift the noise concern from one location to another.

South flow operations happen only during times of poor weather conditions, which, in the case of SJC, is approximately 20 percent of the year. Recently, weather has dictated the use of SJC south flow more heavily.

In response to your first request, the wind and FAA Order 7110.65 determine the active runway at SJC. In accordance with paragraph 3-5-1 of FAA Order 7110.65, when there is a tailwind of 5 knots or more, SJC Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) must utilize Runway 12. This is the least favorable configuration for both the SJC ATCT and the Northern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) and it is not utilized more than is necessary. Runway changes are complicated, they increase noise due to delay vectoring and holding and more importantly, introduce risk in the NAS, if done too often. SJC ATCT uses forecasted wind reports to avoid “chasing” the wind, which may result in SJC being on Runway 12 for periods when the tailwind is less than 5 knots if the wind is forecasted to remain out of the east/southeast and increase in velocity.

In response to your second request, please consider whether you and your constituents, as well as local elected officials, are interested in working with SJC to form a community roundtable to address the types of concerns and make specific, consensus-based recommendations that consider issues and input from all potentially affected communities. A roundtable's recommendations regarding possible changes can be provided to the airport, whose sponsors can then review and assess these specific suggestions before sharing with the FAA. The FAA's review and analysis of specific recommendations will follow applicable laws, regulations, orders and guidance.

A "roundtable" is generally a term for a voluntary organization designed to address community concerns regarding aircraft operations often associated with a nearby airport. A roundtable brings together airport, community, and airline industry representatives in the same room, at the same time, to identify and discuss issues of concern and possible resolutions. FAA representatives can participate in roundtable meetings, when invited, to provide technical information and advice, but the FAA is never a member and does not vote on roundtable recommendations.

In the FAA's experience, the most effective roundtable recommendations reflect consensus among its membership--which includes considering issues and input from all potentially affected communities. Consensus recommendations tend to result in long-term, satisfactory solutions and often reflect the need to balance competing interests.

Thank you for this opportunity to answer your inquiries. If you have any questions, please contact me or Tamara A. Swann, Deputy Regional Administrator, at (310) 725-3550.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis E. Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dennis E. Roberts
Regional Administrator

Enclosure
Transmitted Correspondence

Cc: Washington DC Office