



MIKE BONIN

City of Los Angeles
Councilmember, Eleventh District

July 14, 2015

Santa Monica City Council
City Hall
1685 Main Street, Room 209
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Dear Mayor McKeown and Members of the Santa Monica City Council,

I am writing to implore you not to make the tragic mistake of approving 3-year leases for aviation uses at Santa Monica airport. I urge you to stand strong with me in our joint efforts to correct serious public health and safety issues by moving once and for all to shut down operations at Santa Monica Airport (SMO).

SMO today is an airport that is out of its time period, and completely incompatible with the residential neighborhoods that have grown around its borders. Its runway operates well outside of current FAA safety standards, with homes existing within 250 feet of the end of the runway. In the last five years alone, there have been four accidents at SMO, with three airplanes crashing into my district, the neighborhood of Venice. This airport is not safe, and yet the FAA continues to ignore our pleas to close it down and bring peace of mind to our constituents.

The airport's environmental impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, in the form of noise and choking air pollution, are excessive and severe. In the North Westdale neighborhood of my district, the jet fumes are so thick on some days that local residents are forced to seek shelter inside their homes. In Venice, residents who live nowhere near SMO are forced to deal with the unrelenting noise of airplanes flying overhead. For those closest to the airport, they live with the palpable and reasonable fear that a plane will fall out of the sky and into their home. I know that you hear the same concerns from your constituents as well.

Santa Monica voters understand the urgency to act, and they gave clear instructions last year by overwhelming vote to reject aviation uses at SMO; opting instead to give you the power to shut this airport down and use it for parks, open space, and recreational facilities. With the expiration of the 1984 Santa Monica Airport Agreement with the FAA, the City of Santa Monica is no longer obligated to operate an airport as of July 1, 2015. I further support Santa Monica's position that the FAA's 2000 Final Agency Decision made clear that Santa Monica does not need to continue aviation leases past that expiration date. I have also asked the FAA to confirm that any decision regarding SMO, moving forward, is strictly a local land use matter.

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I believe that you care about the terrible impacts of this airport on all local residents. And some of you have expressed your strong support for shutting it down. However, by choosing to approve 3-year leases today, you are sending me, my constituents, and the City of Los Angeles the message that you don't intend to end aviation uses at SMO for the foreseeable future. You are telling us that we are on our own to deal with these impacts – which, in recent years have increasingly fallen on the residents of Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Let me be completely clear: While I will fully support you and be a steadfast partner in your fight to take back control of SMO and shut it down, I will not stand by while you continue to disproportionately impact my constituents with the environmental impacts of your airport.

SMO's current flight path intersects offshore with the flight path of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), which is in my district, and is the world's fourth busiest airport by total aircraft movements. The fact that SMO's flight path converges with that of LAX has serious environmental impacts on two communities in my district: West Los Angeles, which bears the brunt of the air pollution; and Venice, which bears the brunt of the noise. When SMO's jets are ordered to hold and idle on the runway, awaiting an opening in the flight path at LAX, the resulting blast of fumes engulfs the West Los Angeles neighborhood that sits directly in the path of the exhaust. It is not right to force disproportionate environmental impacts on one community in order to relieve another, and yet that seems to be the only purpose of directing air traffic and noise from SMO over Venice, on a course that conflicts with LAX.

It is my sincere hope, and the hope of neighbors in the City of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Monica, that you will continue to work with me to close down this airport. However, in the event that SMO continues to operate against our wishes, it is the firm intent of the City of Los Angeles to pursue procedures that eliminate takeoff convergence and conflicts of primary departure flight tracks at LAX and SMO, and seek to fairly allocate environmental impacts so as not to shift the full or disproportionate burden of the impact from Santa Monica's airport onto the residents of the City of Los Angeles.

The time to act is now. I urge you to take the lead from voters in Santa Monica, and join me in taking the next step to shut this airport down by emphatically saying "NO" to the 3-year aviation leases you have before you today.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Bonin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "M" and "B".

MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District