



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

Mission Support Services
800 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20591

DEC 10 2015

Deborah Padovan
City Clerk
Los Altos Hills
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

RECEIVED

DEC 14 2015

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

Dear Ms. Padovan:

Thank you for your October 30, 2015, letter and enclosed copy of the City Council of the Town of Los Altos Hills' October 14, 2015 Resolution 58-15 ("Resolution") which identified specific actions requested of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Congress.

As the FAA has discussed previously, the Northern California airspace is very complex, with traffic from several major airports proximate to one another, smaller regional airports and military activity. As such, aircraft noise has been an ongoing issue in the Northern California area for many years. All arrival and departure procedures, within the Northern California airspace, are interconnected, interdependent and were designed to improve the safety and efficiency within the National Airspace System (NAS). Longstanding issues, as well as changes to the Northern California TRACON instrument approach and departure procedures have generated noise concerns from local residents of Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties, even though the recently completed Northern California Metroplex project did not result in any significant or reportable noise increases in the study area.

While the Los Altos Hills' Resolution requests several specific actions as a result of other meetings, letters, and reports, the FAA has received suggestions for potential modifications to the current published procedures—in fact, more than 40 distinct issues and/or suggested noise abatement measures have been identified. In response to congressional requests, the FAA developed an initiative to explore such modifications.

We are committed to looking at the new concerns as well. As we assess the feasibility of the suggestions from communities, it will be important for us to look at the solutions from a regional perspective. Certainly, a focus of many of these suggestions is to move aircraft over water versus land more and we will study the feasibility of such changes. Given the geography, population density, and fixed runway configurations at San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose International Airports, many of these suggestions may move aircraft – and therefore noise – from one community to another at different altitudes and times than aircraft currently operate, even if over water operations are increased. It is not possible for us to work with individual communities or entities proposing separate solutions for this reason. We recommend establishing a regional roundtable made of area community leaders who will make recommendations to address noise concerns and provide an entity for the FAA to work with that is truly representative of the area as a whole.

The work to assess feasibility and understand whether or not the suggested measures will adequately address noise concerns is a major body of work that will take time. We are committed to working through the issues as quickly as possible. It is important to note that assessing feasibility and making a decision to proceed with Phase 2 is just the first step in the process. Any modifications and/or new procedures that are determined to be initially feasible, flyable, and operationally acceptable from a safety point of view, will then be considered for further action. Such modifications may be made using the guidance found in current FAA Orders, directives, and labor agreements which include conducting the Environmental Review and Safety Risk Management. This will include appropriate environmental review consistent with FAA Order 1050.1F (effective July 16, 2015) before approving any airspace changes. This will also include appropriate public outreach, such as seeking feedback from a community roundtable, members of affected industry, and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association before moving forward with the process. Based on the outcome of the modifications review phase, and provided the proposed procedure(s) meet safe and efficient use of the navigable airspace, as well as all applicable environmental laws and requirements, the FAA will implement procedures, conduct any required airspace changes and additional negotiated actions, as needed.

Finally, this letter does not constitute a final decision of the FAA or a re-opening of the FAA's August 6, 2014 final decision for the Northern California Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Metroplex.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Molly Harris, Acting Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ELR', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elizabeth L. Ray
Vice President, Mission Support Services
Air Traffic Organization