



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

Western-Pacific Region
Office of the Regional Administrator

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Los Angeles, CA 90009-2007

JAN 06 2017

Ms. Kimberly J. Becker
Director of Aviation
Norman Y. Mineta
San Jose International Airport
1701 Airport Boulevard, Suite B-1130
San Jose, CA 95110-1206

Dear Ms. Becker:

Thank you for your letter dated November 30, 2016, regarding your concerns about growing use and noise impacts of the south flow landing approach.

Consistent with its statutory mission, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) continues to work to ensure the safe and efficient use of our national airspace system.

While safety remains the FAA's highest priority, the agency does attempt to address noise impacts by designing procedures over water and industrial areas when safety and efficiency permit. The FAA is also mindful that while changes to an approach may solve a noise issue in one area, they may simply shift the noise concern from one location to another.

ZORSA is on the Area Navigation (RNAV) Required Navigation Performance (RNP) Z to runway (RWY) 12 at San Jose International Airport (SJC) and is located over Sunnyvale. ZORSA is on the Radius to a Fix leg of the RNP approach and is used during RWY 12 operations. The location of ZORSA has not changed. The RWY 12 RNP approach was developed in 2011 and was not part of Metroplex. This RNP approach was modified in early 2016 by moving the fix HITIR approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ nautical miles to the southeast (away from Sunnyvale) and raising the altitude from 3,600 to 4,000 at HITIR.

Not all aircraft fly the RNP approach into SJC and the Northern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) (NCT) does still vector many aircraft for the SJC RWY 12 RNAV or Instrument Landing System approaches. Usually these aircraft are descending to 3,000 feet on the downwind, which overflies Sunnyvale. This practice also has not changed in over 20 years and NCT is unable to keep these aircraft higher due to the conflict with other traffic, including the San Francisco final.

Weather has dictated the use of SJC South flow more heavily, recently. For September 2015 vs September 2016, 10 percent of SJC traffic landed on a South flow runway (12's). For October 2015, 2 percent of traffic landed on SJC South flow runways, while traffic in October 2016, had 33 percent of SJC traffic landing on the South flow runways. Due to this increase caused by the weather conditions, the FAA understands why the community has noticed a change.

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 Tower must utilize RWY 12. This is the least favorable configuration for both the Tower and the 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 National Airspace System if done too often. SJC Tower will utilize forecasted wind reports to avoid "chasing" the wind, which may result in SJC being on RWY 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.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glen A. Martin".

Glen A. Martin
Regional Administrator