

May 2015 Update- All things Aviation:



If you'd like additional information, please contact Newport Beach City Manager Dave Kiff at dkiff@newportbeachca.gov.

JWA March-April

As noted previously, passenger levels for March 2015 vs. 2014 increased by +7.2%. ADDs for March were 112.45 vs. 110.77 a year ago. International continued to see a down turn as March 2015 ADDs were 3.13 vs. 4.56 a year ago. The airport overall for the first quarter is +5.1% ahead of last year. The airport attributed the March increases to new activity by Dallas-based Southwest Airlines—which began flying to its home city from John Wayne in November. An increase in passenger totals for Seattle-based Alaska Airlines also contributed to the gain in March. As also noted previously, these numbers may increase further as Southwest plans to begin flights from JWA to Puerto Vallarta in June—it now flies to Cabo San Lucas and Mexico City from here and Alaska also plans to add international flights².

While the full numbers are not fully reported the airport anticipates that April will show an approximate increase of +5% for April 2015 vs. 2014. For the full year of 2015, JWA is projecting 9.9 MAP. Currently the JWA Settlement Agreement establishes the MAP at 10.8 MAP through December 31, 2020.

¹ The picture was a recent winner of the JWA Photo Contest

² HR 1051 discussed in recent updates has not progressed since the 3/12/15 action referring the bill to the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security.

County to Monitor the Monitors

On November 25, 2014, the Board of Supervisors authorized a contract with BridgeNet International, Inc. for the replacement of John Wayne Airport's aircraft noise and operations monitoring system (including field hardware and software). The current system was installed in 1997. (The previous City monthly reports addressed that change.) As the County did the last time they replaced field equipment, the County committed to conducting side-by-side testing of the old and new equipment. To that end, BridgeNet has installed new field equipment at four key monitor sites 1, 2 and 3 (under the departure path) and site 8 (under the approach path). On March 1st, the County began collecting noise data from both their current monitors and the new monitoring equipment. The County will collect data from the new and old monitors at these four sites through May 31, 2015.

The last side-by-side test (1997) showed that the old and new microphones did not record noise data in exactly the same way. As a result, adjustments to the noise limits were required to ensure that the change in equipment did not result in JWA's noise limits being more restrictive – or less restrictive – than the previous limits defined in the Settlement Agreement. The County won't know until they have completed the side-by-side monitoring period at the end of May whether similar adjustments will be necessary this time. If adjustments are needed to achieve parity, the County will present their analysis and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and the settling parties for their consideration later this year. The County will share the information provided above with the other parties to the Settlement Agreement (i.e., City of Newport Beach, Airport Working Group and Stop Polluting Our Newport) as part of their continuing dialogue with them.

Vigilance

Many residents have continued to ask about the City's efforts to monitor the goings on at JWA. Be assured that, just like the story above regarding the Noise Monitor Review and Testing, the City remains vigilant. As noted by current and past newsletters,

the City is aware of many different issues such as Southwest Airlines' continually growing presence at JWA; the focus on international routes, and national political clout; compliance with the Settlement Agreement and remains aware of trends that might threaten it. Every indication to date is that the County is steadfast in its resolve to protect the Settlement Agreement.³

In the years ahead there will be challenges for cities neighboring airports. Among other things, the ground seems to be shifting for federal management of air traffic control and it's not clear whether local input on air traffic routes will be more difficult even than it is today. This will continue to be of great interest for those of us who care about such issues. The City is committed to maintaining the highest quality of life.

Southwest New Service

Southwest Airlines announced new nonstop service from John Wayne Airport (JWA) to St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri. Service to Kansas City (MCI) and St. Louis (STL), Missouri, is scheduled to begin on November 22, 2015.

MetroPlex Environmental Assessment

The latest information is that the environmental assessment for the MetroPlex will be released on or about June 10, 2015. For additional detail see the footnote below, which repeats the previous information provided in this regard.⁴ Despite repeated attempts to get additional information regarding this project, it has so far not been provided.

³ See March and April 2015 Update for reports on the same.

⁴ The Southern California Airspace is undergoing what may be loosely termed redesign. Again the community is reminded that preparation of the Draft Environmental Assessment ("EA") is underway and the FAA intends to issue it in 2015. The EA will be publicly available for 30 days before the FAA would issue a final determination on the project. The following webpage will announce the availability of the FAA documents and any contact information related to providing comments:
http://oapmenvironmental.com/socal_metroplex/socal_introduction.html

Departures JWA

To follow up on the April Update and information regarding departures at JWA; The FAA has advised as follows regarding any potential changes for 2015:

"Currently, the only SIDs at SNA that are scheduled to be published for the remainder of the 2015 is the STREL and IRVINE SIDs. They are only being amended to add a 'Top Altitude' (which is a recent ATC requirement). 'Top Altitude' is defined in the pilot-controller glossary as: 'In reference to SID published altitude restrictions, the charted 'maintain' altitude contained in the procedure description or assigned by ATC."

An additional change to come is the design by the FAA of the PLZZA ONE departure at JWA. The only information to date from the FAA is that PLZZA ONE is a departure scheduled for a publication date of February 4, 2016 and it is part of the SOCAL MetroPlex project. The City and County are seeking further clarification, so far it has not been provided.

NextGen Under Attack

Recently a panel of 10 academic experts brought together by the academy's National Research Council (NRC) said the FAA was not delivering the system that had been promised and should "reset expectations" about what it is delivering to the public and the airlines that use the system. NextGen was conceived as a revolutionary transformation in the system that handles about 30,000 flights and 2 million passengers each day. It was intended to embrace the myriad 21st-century advances in technology to replace a radar-based system developed during World War II.

The report from the NRC concludes:

- "The original vision for NextGen is not what is being implemented today."
- "This shift in focus has not been clear to all stakeholders."

- “Airlines are not motivated to spend money on equipment and training for NextGen.”

- “Not all parts of the original vision will be achieved in the foreseeable future.”

- “NextGen, as currently executed, is not broadly transformational.”

- “‘NextGen’ has become a misnomer.”

The report was done at the request of Congress, which has contemplated separating the air-traffic control function — and with that, NextGen — from the FAA and placing it in the hands of a self-supporting government corporation modeled after several European examples.

Airports in the Region

LAX- March 2015

LAX saw just a slight increase for the March of 2015 with an overall passenger increase of +4.17% versus the same period of last year. Once again international travel enjoyed an overall increase of +5.41%. Year to date the airport passenger levels are up +2.68% for the year.

ONT- March 2015

ONT saw a slight increase overall for the month of March versus the same period last year, with an increase of +1.75%. International passengers increased by +75.93%. Overall, the airport is up +4.30% for the year. Some people have asked about Southwest Airlines’ presence at ONT. Currently Southwest Airlines’ percentage of flights at ONT constitutes approximately 34.65 % of the flights from the airport.

Bob Hope

There appears to be some hope for a rebound at Bob Hope Airport as numbers for March at the airport saw an increase of +5.2% in March compared to the same month last

year, beating budget projections by the same amount, according to airfield officials. On the heels of other airports in the region, with the exception of Long Beach, the industry is seeing one of its best years in recent times.

2015 Trends

According to some airline industry analysts, US full-schedule airlines are planning to put 3.6% more seats in the skies in the second half of 2015, compared to last year. And while increasing capacity, the airlines plan to add only 1.6% more departures. The carriers apparently have concerns regarding the effect on international traffic due to a strong dollar, as well as higher fuel prices. The capacity increase described above may change in the latter part of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016. Forecasts for 2015 are estimating an overall increase of 2.2% in air traffic, which may be reflected in a small decline in load factors.

Meanwhile the load factor in February 2015 (84.2) was higher than in any month since the peaks in January and February 2014. The February 2015 load factor was the third highest all-time, just below the first two months of 2014. Load factors have generally increased since the recession because passenger travel has increased at a faster pace than capacity. In February, Revenue Passenger Miles (RPMs) were at the second highest level, down from the all-time high set in December but exceeding January, the third highest month. The last 10 months, starting with May 2014 through February 2015 are the 10 all-time highest months for RPMs.

For those who follow this information more closely, JWA in 2014, according to the DOT had an 85.73% load factor and currently for 2015 is at 84.13 %.

FAA to Study Noise

The Federal Aviation Administration plans to study airport noise across the United States to determine whether policymakers need to change the way they measure noise from passing aircraft. Describing the project as the most comprehensive single U.S. noise survey conducted, the FAA has stated that it would begin polling communities around 20 airports by mail and telephone within the next two to three months. The agency, which did not identify the airports, hoped to finish gathering data by the end of 2016.