



# AVIATION ACTIVITIES UPDATE

September 16, 2020

## County Board of Supervisors Approves Leases with Airport's Fixed Base Operators

At its Tuesday, September 15 meeting, the Orange County Board of Supervisors further advanced the John Wayne Airport General Aviation Improvement Program (GAIP) with its approval of 35-year leases with two of the private companies that will build out and operate the airport's new general aviation facilities. Known as full-service fixed base operators (FBOs), Clay Lacy Aviation and ACI Jet will provide services such as aircraft storage and parking, fueling, and maintenance to the general aviation community.

The City of Newport Beach (City) has led a multi-year effort to prevent the GAIP from increasing general aviation jet traffic above Newport Beach and other communities. Together with aviation-focused community groups, our collective work led to the Board of Supervisors taking deliberate actions to ensure the GAIP does not expand the airport or the number of general aviation jets based at John Wayne Airport (JWA).

Early on, the City and its partners were able to convince the Board to move forward with a project that limits the number of full-service FBOs to two, instead of three as JWA staff recommended. This reduces the number of aircraft parking spaces by 242, or about a 40 percent cut. Particularly significant, the Board included in the project a land use plan proposed by Supervisor Steel that restricts most of the space available under the GAIP for the smaller and quieter general aviation aircraft. The City believes these significant concessions by the County of Orange (County) will result in fewer flights over Newport Beach and surrounding communities.

After the project was approved, the City continued to advocate for the inclusion of additional community protections in the long-term leases between the County and the FBOs. The County responded by including two key provisions in the leases.

- The Board included lease terms that will help protect, for decades to come, its earlier land use decision that preserves the majority of space available under the GAIP for the smaller and quieter general aviation aircraft. This will help protect Newport Beach from additional noise impacts.
- The Board included provisions that prohibit the operation of a commercial airline from the area reserved for general aviation. This was particularly important to the community groups and it supports the City's longstanding position that all commercial carriers should operate only out of the commercial terminal, and not expand into the area of JWA historically set aside for general aviation.

The City also asked the Board to include lease terms that limit the operating hours of the FBOs. The Board chose not to do so in the leases based on advice given by the County's legal counsel. However, Clay Lacy Aviation and ACI Jet voluntarily committed to set hours of operation that will encourage their customers to arrive and depart the airport at times that align with the commercial curfew. This is a new benefit brought about by the efforts of the City, community groups and the cooperation of these FBOs.

Unfortunately, the Board also chose not to eliminate the General Aviation Facility or to include a requirement that the Board must approve any material changes to the leases that may be proposed in the future.

As always, the City will remain diligent and continue to work to protect our community. In the coming weeks, City staff will be meeting with JWA staff to discuss the proposed development of a noise abatement program specific to general aviation.

### Background on the GAIP

The City of Newport Beach (City) has been involved in the GAIP since the County initiated the environmental review for the project. The City has strongly supported the preservation of small general aviation at the JWA for decades and knew the County desired to update the airport's aging general aviation facilities. We became very concerned however, when the Draft Environmental Impact Report was published in the September 2018.

The proposed project and most of the alternatives went far beyond updating facilities and would have surely led to an increase in general aviation jet traffic over Newport Beach. County staff recommended the project alternative that would have added a third, full-service FBO to the airport and eventually resulted in more jet departures than there are today and there would be under any of the other project alternatives.

The City, local aviation-focused community groups, and residents joined together to prevent that from happening. And, we did. Not only did we stave off the growth of general aviation jet traffic, but the approved project is even better for small general aviation (small GA) than what exists at JWA today. For the first time in the airport's history, the Board of Supervisors took specific action to preserve airport acreage for small GA aircraft. The Board-adopted land use restrictions actually set aside more space for small GA than for larger GA aircraft, including jets.

| Today                         | Approved Project                |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Approx. 31 acres for small GA | Approx. 34.6 acres for small GA |
| Approx. 29 acres for GA jets  | About 25.6 acres for GA jets    |
| Two full-service FBOs         | Two full-service FBOs           |

To be clear, the GAIP will not lead to a physical expansion of the airport and there will be fewer general aviation jets parked at JWA than there are today. And, Clay Lacy and ACI Jet heard our community throughout the GAIP planning process and voluntarily committed to set their operating hours in a manner that will help discourage late-night flights.

Every airport-related protection Newport Beach has today, and the concessions the County made with the GAIP, are the result of our community working together and the County's willingness to hear and respond to Newport Beach's concerns. The City appreciates the time and hard work that many community volunteers dedicated to this process.