



January 13, 2020

City of San Jose, Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement  
Attn: David Keyon, Environmental Project Planner  
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Tower  
San Jose CA 95113-1905

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Amendment to the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport Master Plan (PP 18-103)

Dear Mr. Keyon:

Thank you for including the City of Santa Clara in the environmental review process for the Amendment to the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport Master Plan. We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Master Plan Amendment, which would amend the existing Airport Master Plan to modify certain airfield components, update aviation demand forecasts and expand the horizon year from 2027 to 2037, and modify future facilities requirements, including terminal projects, air cargo facilities projects, general aviation projects, and aviation support projects, to reflect the updated demand forecasts.

Upon review of the Draft EIR, Santa Clara offers the following comments:

### **Project Description**

Based on our review, we understand that proposed projects will modify or realign various taxiways, runway pavement areas, and markings to reduce the potential for runway incursions and to improve compliance with current FAA design standards, but that the length of existing runways will not be expanded, nor will new runways be constructed. Given that the improvements to airfield facilities will not include such expansion, please confirm as correct our understanding that the Amendment should not result in the need for restrictions on land use in the surrounding vicinity beyond those that already exist, and should not require amendment to existing safety zones, as identified in the Santa Clara Airports Land Use Commission (ALUC) Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for the Airport. The Project Description states that the Santa Clara County ALUC will review the proposed amendment to the Airport Master Plan for consistency with the CLUP, and will amend the CLUP as necessary to maintain consistency. Please provide additional information about what types of amendments might be necessary for the CLUP as a result of the Master Plan Amendment.

## **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The Draft EIR identifies a significant and unavoidable impact related to an increase in operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from the anticipated increases in aircraft operations. The EIR states that the Airport has no authority to directly mitigate GHG emissions associated with aircraft operations, but acknowledges that the Airport Carbon Accreditation Program, developed by the Airports Council International (ACI) in 2008, provides a method for airports to voluntarily reduce GHG emissions. The Program includes four levels of accreditation: Level 1 Mapping, Level 2 Reduction, Level 3 Optimization, and Level 3+ Neutrality. The EIR notes that numerous airport operators worldwide have used, and are using the Program and to date, Level 3+ Neutrality has been achieved by 55 airports globally, including two in North America. However, the EIR does not require mitigation to achieve Level 3+ Neutrality. Instead, the EIR includes Mitigation Measure GHG-1.1, which requires that the Airport develop and implement a phased carbon management program consistent with the standards of ACI Level 3, which would require calculating annual carbon emissions from Airport activity, identifying emissions reduction targets, tracking progress toward achieving effective carbon management procedures, and publishing an annual carbon footprint report. Even with this measure, the EIR concludes that the project's incremental increase in GHG emissions is considered significant and unavoidable. It is not clear why Level 3+ Neutrality is not required, since this would neutralize any remaining emissions by requiring offsets.

Public Resources Code section 21002 states that "public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects." Under Public Resources Code section 21061.1, a mitigation measure is feasible if "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors."

Because mitigation in the form of offsets is available to reduce the impacts of increased GHG emissions from aircraft operations, and has been feasible to implement in several other airports, the EIR should be revised to require achievement of Level 3+ Neutrality or explain why such a measure is not feasible at the San Jose Airport to mitigate the identified impact, which would increase GHG emissions by approximately 51 percent when compared to existing conditions.

## **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The Draft EIR states that the Project would double the Airport's fuel storage, by expanding the fuel storage facility from 2,000,000 gallons to 4,000,000 gallons. Mitigation Measure HAZ-1.1 in part states that the "Airport and Airport tenants will continue to implement its program to minimize accident risks at the fuel handling and storage facilities." Please clarify what the applicable "program" is. Further, please clarify whether the program will be updated to account for the fuel storage facility doubling in size.

If the relevant "program" is the Airport's Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan, prepared pursuant to 40 C.F.R. Part 112 and/or California Health and Safety Code, Chapter 6.67, Santa Clara additionally seeks clarification regarding why the 2015 SPCC Plan does not

account for the existing 2,000,000 gallon fuel storage capacity. (See SPCC Plan, Attachment 3 [total reportable oil storage capacity listed as 43,516 gallons].) Please confirm whether the 2015 SPCC Plan will be amended to address this omission and to include the Project's additional 2,000,000 gallons in storage capacity, or whether a 2020 SPCC Plan update will do so.

## Noise

The City of Santa Clara retained Wilson Ihrig to review the Draft EIR and Noise Assessment prepared for the Airport Master Plan Amendment, and their analysis is attached to this letter. Wilson Ihrig identifies the following issues:

**Night time noise:** As stated in the Wilson Ihrig letter, the Draft EIR considers the noise level from a single aircraft flyover without regard for the time of day, and does not consider the potential impact of increased night operations. For residents of Santa Clara that live near the airport, the potential impact of increased night operations warrants analysis of single event noise and the potential for sleep disturbance to provide a meaningful analysis.

**Use of Relative CNEL Threshold:** The EIR relies on a relative threshold of significance (CNEL), which the Wilson Ihrig letter explains could lead to ever increasing noise levels. We understand that CNEL is a commonly used metric for determining the significance of impacts. However, as explained in the Wilson Ihrig letter, if the noise level today is 65.0 CNEL and an increase to 66.4 CNEL with this project is found to be a less than significant impact, then the next Master Plan project will take 66.4 CNEL as the baseline and an increase to 67.8 CNEL will be found to be a less than significant impact. The total increase would be 2.8 dB, which would be deemed a significant impact if it resulted from either project individually, but would probably not be in the two-project scenario because the baseline for the second project will be the noise level resulting from the first project. Because of this, and the fact that the Airport will likely continue to operate beyond 2037 and future amendments to the Master Plan are foreseeable, we request that an absolute criteria also be considered, as described in the Wilson Ihrig letter.

**DEIR CNEL measured v. modeled data:** The Wilson Ihrig letter includes two questions regarding differences in the modeled noise values versus measured noise values. We request a response to those questions to ensure that any discrepancies are accounted for and do not have an effect on the conclusions of the analysis.

**Supplement A-weighted (dBA) Analysis with C-weighted (dBC) Analysis:** The Wilson Ihrig letter indicates the prevalence of low-frequency noise in jet aircraft operations, could be best measured by a dBC analysis, and we requests that the noise analysis that has been done using A-weighted decibels (dBA) be supplemented with a similar analysis using C-weighted decibels (dBC).

**Corroboration of measured CNEL levels:** The City of Santa Clara also requested that Wilson Ihrig review noise levels at Noise Monitoring Stations located in Santa Clara near the locations used to perform the analysis in the Draft EIR to corroborate the results. It appears that the values described in the Draft EIR are in sufficient agreement with the results at the City's monitoring

sites. The City of Santa Clara will continue to monitor noise at these locations to ensure that future noise levels remain within the range of those reported in the Draft EIR.

## **Transportation**

**Traffic Study Scope of intersection analysis:** Please verify that the intersections of Lafayette/Central, Scott/Central, and Lafayette/El Camino should not be included in the analysis. These intersections should be included if they meet the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines 10-trip rule.

**Background Conditions:** It is unclear what year background conditions occur in, as this is not stated in the traffic study completed for this project. In addition, it does not seem that any portion of the City Place project was included in background condition. Depending on what year was used for the background conditions, either Phases 1-3 or full-buildout of City Place should be included under background conditions.

**Cumulative Conditions:** The cumulative conditions for this project should include full build-out of City Place, along with any applicable mitigation measures for which the City Place project is 100% responsible.

**Intersection Improvements:** The intersections of De La Cruz/Central Expressway intersection will be improved as part of the US 101/Trimble interchange project. The intersection will have the following improvements:

- 3 NB Lefts and 2 NB throughs,
- 3 SB throughs and 2 SB rights,
- 3 EB Lefts and 2 EB rights.

The project should be completed in Year 2023. Thus, this should be included in the cumulative condition and background, should background be after Year 2023. Please confirm with the County/VTA that completion year for the interchange project is still Year 2023 and if so, the level of service analysis will need to be revised for this intersection.

**Measures to address intersection of De La Cruz and Martin Avenue:** The cumulative mitigation measure for De La Cruz and Martin intersection requires restriping the EB lane configuration to add an additional left-turn lane. Santa Clara requests additional information regarding whether there is sufficient right-of-way to implement this measure, or whether this will require reducing lane widths or removing parking. Please elaborate on this mitigation measure.

**Measures to address intersection of Coleman Avenue and Brokaw Road:** The cumulative mitigation measure for Coleman and Brokaw intersection states that signal phasing modifications are needed at this intersection. However, the mitigation does not state what the phasing requirement would be. Please elaborate. In addition, the removal of the pork chop island is not required to add the third SB through lane, so please remove this language from the mitigation measure. Finally, the project should be contributing a fair share toward funding of the

improvements, but this type of wording is not included in the mitigation measure language. Please revise.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR for the Airport Master Plan Amendment.

Sincerely,



Andrew Crabtree

Director of Community Development

cc: Brian Doyle, City Attorney, City of Santa Clara  
Deanna Santana, City Manager, City of Santa Clara  
Manuel Pineda, Assistant City Manager, City of Santa Clara