2204 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0529
(202) 225-3976

DISTRICT OFFICE:
8436 WEST THIRD STREET
SUITE 600
LOS ANGELES, CA 90048-4183
(323) 651-1040

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0529

HENRY A. WAXMAN
29TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

SENIOR DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT REFORM

MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

May 26, 2000

Administrator Jane F. Garvey
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Garvey:

I am writing on behalf of my constituents who reside near the Santa Monica Airport. For the past several years, there has been growing concern in the community over pollution and safety conditions at the airport. I am writing to ask for your assistance in addressing these problems.

The Santa Monica Airport has a unique layout with approximately 75% of the Airport surrounded by residences. Some homes are located as close as 300 feet from the east end of the runway. I have enclosed for your review an aerial photograph which depicts the close proximity of these homes. I have received numerous complaints about noise, vibrations, fumes, and black soot from airport traffic, and these problems have been further exacerbated by the dramatic rise in jet traffic over the last few years.

In addition, an emerging and potentially more profound concern is the growing use of Santa Monica Airport for business jets, which are steadily increasing in number, size, and speed. The use of these aircrafts is not only disruptive to the surrounding neighborhoods but inconsistent with the size and scale of the facility itself. The 5,000 foot runway, built decades ago, does not meet the safety needs of new aircraft with greater momentum on takeoffs and landings. Furthermore, there is no room to lengthen the runway to accommodate the 1,000 foot safety area necessary for the larger, faster jets emerging in the marketplace. Both ends of the runway are lined with houses and there is only an abrupt slope, a street, and then homes.

I therefore request that the FAA take a more active role in addressing the pollution and safety problems experienced by neighbors of the Santa Monica Airport, so that we can establish additional safeguards as soon as possible. To begin this process, I would like to recommend two feasible solutions for the FAA to evaluate:

1. The FAA should designate 1,000 feet of the existing runway as a runway safety area, similar to the runway safety areas required for new runways. By reducing the length of the runway to only 4,000 usable feet for flight planning and purposes, this would effectively set stricter safety guidelines for the types of aircraft that can be used at the airport.

2. With respect to nighttime noise problems, the FAA should institute an 80 dB maximum noise limit on all arriving aircraft during the established departure curfew hours from 11:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. on weekdays, and from 11:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. on weekends.

The current conditions at Santa Monica Airport and its surrounding neighborhoods will only continue to deteriorate until pragmatic solutions are put into effect. I hope you will seriously consider these recommendations for the airport. I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

Henry A Waxman

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

HAW/le

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Western-Pacific Region
Regional Administrator

P.O. Box 92007
Worldway Postal Center
Los Angeles, CA 90009

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The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Member, United States House of
Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0529

Dear Mr. Waxman:

Thank you for your letter of May 26, 2000, on behalf of your constituents who reside near the Santa Monica Airport, Santa Monica, California. You expressed concerns regarding environmental and safety issues at the Santa Monica Airport.

The city of Santa Monica (city) is primarily responsible for the planning and implementation of actions designed to reduce the affect of noise and other environmental factors on the communities surrounding the Santa Monica Airport. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) primary mission is to ensure the safe and efficient use of navigable airspace.

On January 31, 1984, the city and the FAA executed an agreement that addressed a number of disputes and litigation concerning aircraft noise impacts on the community and access restrictions at Santa Monica Airport. The FAA negotiated the specific terms of the 1984 Agreement to assist the city in responding to airport noise issues. The 1984 Agreement describes the specific points of agreement between the city and the FAA and provides a format within which issues arising in the future can be addressed and resolved. The 1984 Agreement remains in effect until July 1, 2015. Within the context of the FAA's mission and the 1984 Agreement, the FAA will continue to work with the city to address aviation environmental and safety issues.

The FAA considers the Santa Monica Airport to be a safe airport facility. The existing facilities can safely accommodate a large percentage of corporate jet aircraft in the civil aviation fleet. Some aircraft, however, may not be able to operate at their maximum takeoff weight. The pilot-in-command of each aircraft is responsible for ensuring that the airport facilities are adequate to accommodate the operation.

You requested the FAA evaluate two specific recommendations.

1. The FAA should designate 1,000 feet of the existing runway as a runway safety area, similar to the runway safety areas required for new runways. By reducing the length of the runway to only 4,000 feet for flight planning and purposes, this would effectively set stricter safety guidelines for the types of aircraft that can be used at the airport.

The FAA has no authority to require the extension of the runway safety area at Santa Monica Airport. The 1984 Agreement states that "the city will operate and maintain the airport as a viable functioning facility without derogation of its role as a general aviation reliever airport...or its capacity in terms of runway length and width, taxiway system, and runway weight bearing strength until July 1, 2015." A reduction of the runway length to 4,000 feet would restrict the ability of certain types of aircraft to operate at the airport and would be contrary to the city's commitment under the Agreement.

2. With respect to nighttime noise problems, the FAA should institute an 80 dB maximum noise limit on all arriving aircraft during the established departure curfew hours from 11:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. on weekdays, and from 11:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. on weekends.

The FAA has no authority to establish such a noise limit. The establishment of nighttime arrival noise level restrictions by the city is not permitted by the material terms of the 1984 Agreement. The Agreement specifically prohibits the takeoff of aircraft between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., Monday through Friday and between 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The Agreement specifically states "This regulation is included as a material term of this Agreement and is expected to remain in effect. It is agreed that it will not be amended or modified without prior agreement of the parties." Any new or revised noise and access restrictions, applicable to operations by Stage 2 and 3 aircraft, must be established in accordance with the requirements of the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 (ANCA), as implemented by 14 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 161, *Airport Noise and Access Restrictions*.

We trust that this response will clarify the role and authority of the FAA regarding these issues. If you or your staff need further assistance, please contact Mr. Herman C. Bliss, Manager, Airports Division, at (310) 725-3600.

Sincerely,

William C. Withycombe

William C. Withycombe
Regional Administrator

Enclosure
Transmitted Correspondence