

Airport / Community Roundtable
City of Brisbane Aircraft Overflight Noise Workshop
Meeting No. 275
Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Roundtable Members Present

Michael McCarron, City and County of San Francisco Airport Commission
Dave Pine, County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors
Richard Newman, C/CAG Airport Land Use Committee (ALUC)/**Roundtable Chairperson**
Sepi Richardson, City of Brisbane)/**Roundtable Vice-Chairperson**
Marge Colapietro, City of Millbrae
Jeffrey Gee, City of Redwood City
Ken Ibarra, City of San Bruno
Kevin Mullin, City of South San Francisco

Advisory Members Present

San Francisco International Airport
Bert Ganoung, Noise Abatement Manager

Federal Aviation Administration
Patty Daniel, Northern California TRACON

Airline/Flight Operations
None

Roundtable Staff/Consultants

Steve Alverson, Roundtable Coordinator
Phil Wade, Roundtable Support

1. Welcome/Opening Remarks

Chairperson Richard Newman called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M., and welcomed the attendees, introduced members of the Roundtable that were present for the workshop, explained that the Roundtable was in convening a workshop in Brisbane at the request of Vice-Chairperson Sepi Richardson, and described the goals of meeting. Chairperson Newman informed the audience that noise issues in Brisbane were relatively new to the Roundtable, and that the Chair and Roundtable staff was not aware until recently that meetings were occurring with City of Brisbane, FAA, and SFOO related to noise from aircraft departing SFO.

Vice-Chairperson Sepi Richardson also addressed the audience, thanking them for their attendance, and framed the issue for discussion that evening: excessive noise in Brisbane from aircraft departing SFO via the PORTE THREE departure.

2. Workshop Session

A. Presentations Related to Aircraft Overflight

1. *San Francisco International Airport*

Bert Ganoung, manager of the SFO Aircraft Noise Abatement Office, gave a presentation on recent analysis that SFO performed on the overflight issue in Brisbane. Bert acknowledged that SFO has seen a rise in noise complaints from Brisbane residents, and has begun actively looking at flight patterns, analyzing aircraft overflights, and working with the City and Roundtable to try find a way to minimize aircraft noise exposure for Brisbane Residents. Bert showed the “West Plan” air traffic diagram for the Bay Area and explained that the PORTE THREE departure is the main departure route that turns left towards southern destinations. He also explained that aircraft using the Shoreline departure route can affect Brisbane residents as well and that OAK operations also factor into the issue. Bert informed the audience that SFO’s analysis included ten years worth of operational data from 2000 to 2010, as well as the use of noise monitors (both fixed and mobile) in the City. Bert informed the audience that SFO is working hard to inform the airlines about the affected cities and their noise issue. He indicated that the airlines have been very good about working on this; in particular, Emirates, who will issue a “final letter” to their pilots if they do not fly the established routes.

Bert presented the historic overflights from 2000 through 2010, describing factors resulting in the dip in operations after 2001. He also described the various factors causing the recent resurgence in aircraft operations at SFO. Bert went on to describe the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) metric, how it works, and why SFO uses it when measuring noise. Bert stated that the three main airlines contributing to the aircraft noise exposure in Brisbane were Southwest, United, and Virgin America.

Bert explained SFO’s noise abatement obligations: continue working with the Roundtable; continue to monitor departures and noise; focus on heavy departures using the shoreline and quiet chartered departures (contacting airlines to make sure they are aware of these procedures); duplicating the fly quiet video for airline distribution. He concluded his presentation stating that the published departure routes have not changed, while SFO’s aircraft operations have returned to near-2000 levels. The annual CNEL in Brisbane is consistently below 56 dB CNEL (1999-2011); however, Mr. Ganoung noted that the noise level in Brisbane was 53 dB in 2000, dropped to 45 dB in 2006, and has since risen back to 56 dB in 2010. A 10 dB difference is a doubling of noise volume. Aircraft are quieter now than they were in 2000. SFO we must be mindful of all of the communities surrounding the Airport whenever there are proposals to change flight procedures. Through the roundtable, the communities, airlines, FAA, and

SFO will work together to determine any adverse effects and evaluate proposed changes.

2. Federal Aviation Administration

Patty Daniel, Traffic Management Officer at Northern California TRACON (NCT), began her presentation describing TRACON's role within the FAA and in air traffic management in general. After explaining how TRACON functions, who it serves, and what its service area is, Patty explained that there are published routes; however the airlines choose which routes to use. They're going to use the most advantageous route to get to their destination. The dispatchers will look at weather and file a route, but for the most part the airlines will choose their routes. Patty explained that West Plan Flight Tracks arrivals/departures from SFO use the PORTE THREE and Shoreline departure routes. PORTE departures can come off of Runways 1L and 1R or Runways 28L and 28R. The Southeast plan reverses the flow of traffic in the Bay Area, due to adverse weather conditions. When Southeast plan is in effect, aircraft will depart to the southeast and land to the southeast. Patty then explained mid-shift flight tracks, which are different from daytime flight tracks, and used until 7 AM, or 8 AM on weekends.

Patty explained that departures procedures have been in place for 30 years. She indicated that they are affected by weather, aircraft performance, aircraft weight, terrain, and pilot/controller technique. She also said that NCT and SFO have seen changes in airline/aircraft fleet make-up, increases in traffic volume, route/destination concentration, and that they are having a heavier flow today to Southern California and other southern state destinations than in recent years. Patty stated that the Bay Area's airspace is very complex. Any action/change can cause a reaction elsewhere, thereby creating adverse noise impacts in other communities, which would lead to increased complaints, etc.

Patty concluded her presentation by stating that the FAA will work with SFO and the Roundtable to try and address the issue of aircraft overflight noise in Brisbane.

3. Airline

No members from any of the airlines were present at the meeting.

B. Public Comment

1. Questions from Roundtable Members

Roundtable Member Kevin Mullin asked for clarification about what was driving the increase in aircraft noise over Brisbane. Bert Ganoung and Patty Daniel indicated that the increase in flights to pre-2001 levels is the primary contributor to the increase in noise levels.

Chairperson Newman asked Patty Daniel for clarification on how airlines choose their routes, and how much discretion airlines and pilots have in the routes they fly. Patty clarified that airlines will choose routes specified by FAA, and in a busy metro area such

as this one, will tend to stick with the same routes. She also explained that published routes help air traffic controllers have an idea of where aircraft might be if they lose communications with that aircraft.

Roundtable Member Dave Pine expressed his frustration with the airlines that were not in attendance at the meeting. Chairperson Newman explained that it was his understanding that Virgin America would be in attendance and did not know why they were not present that evening. Bert Ganoung also expressed his confusion as to why Virgin America was not in attendance. Member Pine suggested that the Roundtable send a letter to the airlines expressing their disappointment about their non-attendance.

Roundtable Member Pine asked about how the noise levels within the City of Brisbane compared to other locations on the peninsula. Bert Ganoung indicated that there were much noisier areas than Brisbane surrounding SFO. Member Pine then asked Bert Ganoung about Emirates agreeing to not use the Shoreline departure route, and whether or not that same policy would work with other airlines. Bert Ganoung and Patty Daniel indicated that airlines will use a procedure that is most efficient for the type of aircraft flying, the conditions, and their final destination.

Roundtable Member Jeff Gee requested additional historical data on the use of the PORTE THREE departure route from SFO and FAA. He then asked Patty Daniel what kind of process is involved to alter a published departure procedure. Patty indicated that it could take a minimum of 18 months to model, test, approve, and publish a new procedure, but two to five years is not unheard of. Member Gee then asked if slowing or speeding up an aircraft would be considered a procedure change, and whether or not that would be easier to do than changing a departure route. Bert Ganoung indicated that the operation of the aircraft (e.g., throttling up or down) would be at the discretion of the airline, and that it would be a voluntary procedure. Member Gee asked if aircraft, due to improved technology, etc., are now reaching 2,000 feet sooner, doesn't that affect the location of the flight tracks? Patty indicated that yes it would affect the location of the flight tracks. Member Gee then asked whether these tolerances were up to the pilot or TRACON. Patty indicated there were a lot of factors involved in how air traffic controllers will guide aircraft, but that maintaining the required "bubble" of separation between aircraft was the top priority. Member Gee then asked if it was possible to establish certain types of procedures for certain types of aircraft. Patty indicated that the FAA cannot favor any aircraft type and that all routes must be flyable by any type of aircraft.

Chairperson Newman asked Patty Daniel if asking airlines to fly out to the four mile fix that is already established on the PORTE THREE departure prior to turning, instead of turning once they hit 2,000 feet, would be considered an operational change, or a procedural change requiring lengthy analysis. Patty indicated that it would be considered an operational change.

Vice-Chairperson Richardson asked Patty Daniel what the "Quiet Three" departure was. Patty indicated that it was only used between 10 PM and 7 AM for aircraft heading north,

and that when aircraft reach Richmond; they'll either go north towards SAC or east towards Linden. Vice-Chairperson Richardson asked how many aircraft turn at the 4-mile marker when using the PORTE THREE departure. Ms. Daniel indicated that was something they did not track at TRACON. She further stated that the FAA teaches controllers to vector aircraft; not to use procedures that were put in place pre-radar. In order to move aircraft safely/efficiently, she said, they use vectors—we teach our controllers to vector.

Vice-Chairperson Richardson asked how many complaints does it take to make a change at the airport. Bert Ganoung replied that it could take just one. Vice-Chairperson Richardson stated that she knew there have been days when 200 calls have been made, and it feels like the calls are being ignored. Mr. Ganoung replied SFO asks for calls to identify anomalies. He explained that the calls may help identify flights that are excessively noisy or unusual events. If an aircraft performs a procedure poorly, and SFO didn't catch it, the community is SFO's eyes and ears. There are a lot of operations, so the community's calls are helpful and can call SFO's attention to special circumstances.

Vice-Chairperson Richardson asked Bert Ganoung to describe the PORTE THREE departure, which he did for Runway 1L/R and Runway 28L/R departures. He stated that a pilot can lead the turn at 2,000 feet just like we lead our turns in a car, but that the SFO Aircraft Noise Abatement Office doesn't know what a pilot's DME is indicating. The same would be true, he continued, if a controller gives a direction, aircraft can make a standard turn, and lead the turn knowing they'll be at 2,000 feet when they're on their heading; it depends on the pilot.

Vice-Chairperson Richardson thanked Bert Ganoung and Patty Daniel for participating in the workshop and listening to their concerns.

2. Public Comment

Vice-Chairperson Richardson opened the public comment segment of the workshop by introducing Jeff Zajas and Barry Corlett. Mr. Zajas began by saying that he and several other citizens started sfo noise.com to bring awareness to the issue of aircraft overflight noise in Brisbane. Mr. Zajas stated that one of the biggest problems is that no one seems to know what the issue is, and they get conflicting information. Mr. Zajas asked Bert Ganoung and Patty Daniel about the discrepancy between airlines following FAA-approved procedures and routes, but then the pilots making their own choices. Ms. Daniel clarified by indicating that the reason there is some give and take, but the pilot is in ultimate command. Mr. Zajas then suggested that data shows that aircraft cross over downtown Brisbane at altitudes below 2,000 feet. Ms. Daniels responded saying that she has not seen that data, but offered that pilots may lead their turns, but that TRACON does not give that direction to pilots. Mr. Zajas then asked Ms. Daniel why aircraft are turning early, if there is no reason for them not to head out to the 4-mile marker. Ms. Daniels responded indicating that air traffic controllers may turn aircraft early if they see that a higher performing aircraft is taking off behind the first aircraft. Mr. Zajas then

asked that if controller technique factors into the issue, then can't they direct aircraft to fly out further, or turn at higher altitudes? Ms. Daniel answered that many factors are involved; that a higher turn may put aircraft over people's houses that haven't experienced that before. Ms. Daniel added that, in her experience, it doesn't matter what the altitude is, if someone knows that an aircraft is over their house, they'll have a problem with it. She concluded that the FAA was going to work with them on this issue. Mr. Zajac concluded by emphasizing that aircraft are turning early, and in his opinion they don't have to.

The next speaker was Barry Corlett. Mr. Corlett provided a PowerPoint presentation that offered similar data and information that was seen in Bert Ganoung's presentation earlier in the evening. Data in Mr. Corlett's presentation showed that over the last three years, between 25 and 32 percent of all SFO departures fly over Brisbane, which constituted approximately 46,000 departures per year. Mr. Corlett also showed that since 2003, SFO departure traffic has increased by 10 percent and by 65 percent through the Brisbane gate, which Mr. Corlett concluded, constituted a shifting of noise to Brisbane. He echoed Mr. Zajac's statement that the problem was aircraft departing on the PORTE THREE are not using the proper route and turning early, which takes them over downtown Brisbane. Mr. Corlett pointed out that while noise was the primary issue, safety is also a concern. Mr. Corlett ran through the data obtained during SFO's study of overflight noise in Brisbane, noting that there were more noise events at the Solano temporary monitoring station than at the permanent station, and concluded that not enough monitors were used to capture an accurate picture of noise in Brisbane. Mr. Corlett concluded his presentation by offering the following solutions: adhere to the published PORTE THREE procedure—the 4-mile marker must be observed; consider changes to the SFO Roundtable's 'no noise shifting' mandate; modify the procedure—climb to 3000 feet prior to turning as proposed by Virgin America; and safety is primary concern of all—higher altitude means greater safety. Mr. Corlett also added that additional monitors were needed in Brisbane; that a metric should be established for those planes that turn early so the FAA can assess and report the reason/cause; that a better process for tracking noise infractions, rather than relying on resident complaints, should be developed; and that full and open access to noise data should be provided.

Following Mr. Corlett's presentation, George Mazingo, aide to Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, introduced himself and stated that Supervisor Tissier believed the airlines should be held responsible, and that they were ready to bring the matter to Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Following Mr. Mazingo, Assemblyman Jerry Hill introduced himself, stating that he would be writing letters to the airlines re: their non-attendance at this meeting. Mr. Hill stated that the solution seemed to be to get the airlines to turn after the four mile point. Following Mr. Hill, Brian Perkins, chief of staff for Congresswoman Jackie Speier, spoke; stating that the congresswoman is committed to seeing this problem through, and that the FAA must be urged to take a serious look at the problem to find a solution that is successful for everyone and not just for some.

Following Mr. Mazingo, Mr. Hill, and Mr. Perkins, numerous community members addressed the Roundtable members present. Each resident who spoke expressed their concern and frustration with the noise from aircraft overflights. Their concerns ranged from health and safety, to the lack of effect from calling the SFO hotline, to the lack of consequences for the airlines. One resident noted that the permanent noise monitor is on the edge of the “bowl”, but that it is actually louder inside the bowl than on the edge; thus the monitor is not accurately capturing noise levels in Brisbane. Another resident said that she had counted more than 20 aircraft overflights while sitting in the meeting that night.

3. Closing Comments

Chairperson Newman concluded the meeting by thanking Bert Ganoung and Patty Daniel for their willingness to participate in the workshop. He also thanked community members for their input. Mr. Newman stated that the problem is well understood and that the mitigation for this problem is better and more accurate adherence to the PORTE THREE departure, and that the next step to addressing the issue, based upon the discussion he heard that evening, was to formally request the FAA to examine in more depth the use of the PORTE THREE departure by airlines operating at SFO. In this way, he concluded, perhaps something can happen that does not require republishing procedures that would take years.