CITY OF PALO ALTO

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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January 31, 2020

Mr. Ivar C. Satero
Airport Director
San Francisco International Airport
P.O. Box 8097
San Francisco, CA 94128-8097
Submitted via email to airportdirector@flysfo.com

Dear Mr. Satero:

Thank you for providing temporary noise monitors in the City of Palo Alto during late 2018 and for providing the associated report of their data in July 2019. Please accept this letter as a formal request from the City of Palo Alto for inclusion in San Francisco International Airport's permanent noise monitoring program.

As SFO prepares to reinvest in its noise monitoring system and reviews the preferred locations for permanent and temporary noise monitors, we urge you to locate a permanent noise monitor in the City of Palo Alto. As you know, our community is uniquely impacted with the majority of all SFO arrivals (on average, 52-53% of all daily arrivals) flying over Palo Alto. The location of the SIDBY waypoint consistently brings SERFR, OCEANIC and BDEGA West flights directly over our city during their descent.

As you also are aware, you regularly receive significantly more noise reports – from more distinct noise reporters – from Palo Alto than from any other city. With noise reports coming from some 60 different cities surrounding SFO, it is noteworthy that 18% of your reporters are located in Palo Alto. This trend has held steady, month after month, in the years since NextGen was implemented. During the temporary noise monitoring study you so graciously conducted for us, your noise monitors confirmed an average of 269 flights a day over Palo Alto leading to a SFO Aircraft CNEL level ranging between 51dBA and 53 dBA; these Palo Alto noise levels are higher than the Aircraft CNEL of several SFO noise monitors located in San Mateo and San Francisco Counties. The community input and the science agree: Palo Alto is clearly impacted.

The traditionally established locations for SFO noise monitoring were selected prior to the implementation of NextGen. Your decisions going forward should take into consideration the current and future state of aircraft operations and the value of data to be gained from new and better noise monitoring locations. We believe the location of a noise monitor in Palo Alto would strengthen both SFO's Fly Quiet Program and the FAA's refinement of its noise modeling.

A noise monitor in Palo Alto would enhance SFO's Fly Quiet Program by complimenting the traditional emphasis on departure noise with noise data for the majority of SFO arrivals. A Palo Alto location would uniquely monitor where aircraft are vectored at low altitudes (typically between 3,500 and 6,000 ft) before final approach. More complete data would result in more accurate recognition of which airlines are indeed flying the quietest.

In addition, data from noise monitors in locations like Palo Alto could contribute to the improvement of the FAA's AEDT noise model. The FAA has recognized that the predictive capabilities of the AEDT model rapidly degrade as one moves away from the airport, yet the impact on areas not traditionally considered in noise monitoring is a real concern in the post-NextGen environment. Noise data from areas newly impacted since NextGen, which are often farther from the airport than those considered for noise monitoring prior to NextGen, is critical to supporting the improvement of FAA noise modeling. With the majority of SFO arrivals converging over Palo Alto, we are the single most logical location for collecting such new data.

We appreciate that SFO is soliciting community input from the SFO Roundtable for recommendations regarding the placement of noise monitors, but we also respect that the final authority for such operational decisions rests with SFO. We greatly appreciate the efforts SFO has made to be a good neighbor; such as by attending meetings of the Santa Clara / Santa Cruz Roundtable, convening a community meeting in Palo Alto about the airport's new arrival system, and providing temporary noise monitoring and analysis in our city. We hope you will continue this collaboration with the provision of a permanent noise monitor in Palo Alto. It is not only the neighborly thing to do; it is the most logical scientific choice for measuring impacts of the majority of SFO arrivals – and for measuring nearly all arrivals unable to avoid residential neighbors by flying over the Bay.

After successfully testing four monitoring locations during the recent temporary noise study in Palo Alto, we are confident we can provide a reliable hosting location for your equipment. We look forward to partnering with you on this worthwhile endeavor.

Sincerely,

Ed Shikada
City Manager

cc: Mr. E. R. Ganoung, Jr., Manager, Aircraft Noise Abatement; via email
Palo Alto City Council